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Memorial Edition

PLAYS BY CLYDE FITCH

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME FOUR

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PREFATORY NOTE

Clyde Fitch was one of the very few American dramatists to enjoy an international reputation. He was often criticized by the Press for a certain foreign tone which sometimes crept into his original plays; and undoubtedly, he was influenced by the technique of the French school in his delineation of feminine psychology. Perhaps none of his plays enjoyed a more wide-spread recognition than "The Truth." The stage history of this drama was precarious at the outset of its American career, for, though in many ways it was an artistic success, heightened by the deftness of Mrs. Clara Bloodgood's acting, it was accounted a financial failure; and Mr. Fitch reached what might be described as his lowest ebb of discouragement. The play opened in New York on January 7, 1907, and, in a letter of January 11, Mr. Fitch wrote that, though some of the criticisms proclaimed this play his very best, the praise had arrived too late. The whole situation he described as being heart-break-

ing. "If the business increases sufficiently," he wrote, "they will keep it on and give it a chance! If by the middle of next week the business is not good, it will be taken off in three weeks! It will be a dreadful blow to me, and a discouragement which I do not like to face in my present tired condition. . . ." Later on in the month, at the same time that his manager was discussing the possibilities of taking off "The Truth", a proposal was made that the play be given at special matinees. "I fear this will kill it!" wrote Mr. Fitch, "I am worn out and bitterly disappointed. Frohman does it in London in March, but *this* is what counted for *me*."

The career of the play, after this disastrous record, is of an entirely different nature, for it would seem that, from the moment it was presented in London, it began to be reckoned as one of Mr. Fitch's technical triumphs. He went to London for the opening of "The Truth", and the day after the first performance he wrote: "There was not a hiss nor a boo. But they cheered and cheered and shouted 'Bravo' after every act; and at the end kept it up, and then began calling for me. I had decided not to go out, so finally the manager came before the curtain and said — 'Mr. Clyde Fitch is not in the house.' I was behind a box curtain! Tempest is wonderful."

After its success in England, "The Truth" had a notable career in Germany, Italy, Russia, Hungary, and Scandinavia.

In a letter from Berlin, dated April 15, 1908, Mr. Fitch wrote concerning the German production of "The Truth": "The house was full, and so appreciative. It had been announced that the author was coming to see the play; and at the end of the piece, the audience rose and cheered, and called me out three times. They said nothing of this sort had ever happened in Hamburg in the middle of the run of a play. The piece is being arranged for in the best theatres all over Germany. They expect it to be staged in three here."

Revived by Winthrop Ames in New York City, at the Little Theatre, during the Spring of 1914, the admirers of Clyde Fitch realized what they had maintained ever since his death, that his comedies retain much of the vitality they originally possessed, their humor and character values being as apposite as ever. Those who assembled for the dress rehearsal of "The Truth" on the evening of April 11, 1914, felt again that brilliant, youthful, personal note which Mr. Fitch always put into his plays, and which constituted much of his charm as a playwright. Though more than seven years had passed since its first

performance, it was just as timely as ever; and the characteristics which raised it out of its *locale* into a larger study of feminine lying, seemed to have gained more poignancy with the years.

In actual date of composition, "The Truth" was preceded by "The Woman in the Case", the latter attaining a popularity abroad which did not exceed that of "The Truth", but which still continues, inasmuch as preparations are now afoot for its presentation in Spain. During that period of his career which brought forth "The Woman in the Case", Mr. Fitch met with many failures; and that despondent tone, detected in the letter previously quoted, was only a culmination of the repeated lack of sympathy which met him journalistically on all sides in America. A characteristic letter was written by him from "Quiet Corner", just after the failure of "The Coronet of the Duchess." "Midnight. Dear ————: A log fire, Boots, Fiametta, and Clan, all sprawled about, and ME at the table writing. I feel very small in this house alone, and somehow the failure of the play seems bigger! I have worked hard to-day, though; just as if I felt the public was crazy for me! I go to rehearsal of the 'Her Own Way' company to-morrow." Another one of his failures at this time was the slim little

comedy, "Glad of It", and he now waked up to the fact that it would be necessary for him to write something strong and something different, in order to hold attention and to bring his public back to him. It was this which prompted him in the creation of his melodramatic "The Woman in the Case." The morning after the opening of the play, when the papers were unanimous in praising him for the dramatic effectiveness of the one big scene, he wrote: "It is what I told you I *knew* I *must* do! And I have done it, and oh, I cannot tell you the relief! The strain before I saw the papers was almost more than I could stand."

The stage history of "The City", as it pertains to Mr. Fitch, is an incomplete record; for, when he left on his final trip to Europe in June, 1909, while the manuscript was practically completed, he had reserved the finishing touches until rehearsals were well under way. Undoubtedly the play was prompted by two dominant desires on the part of the dramatist: first, to prove to his public his capability of creating character and situations that were strictly masculine in their attitude and strength; and secondly, the quiet life lived by Mr. Fitch at "The Other House", in Katonah, brought into sharp contrast the demands and strains of the city upon individual

character. With these two dominant purposes, it might be said that from the personal side "The City" contains more of Mr. Fitch's firm conviction, and from the autobiographical side shows more of the deepening of his personal psychology than any of his other plays. Those who visited him during the writing of this piece were naïvely and joyously taken into his confidence; he discussed his scenes, he asked advice about his characters, he planned with his friends while he was motoring or walking; so that even before the play was actually put upon paper, those who were close to him were as familiar with his intentions regarding "The City" as he was himself. During this time, we were privileged to see much of Mr. Fitch, and to study his methods of workmanship. We remember one morning, when motoring, we were held up on the road because of a flat tire; and, while repairs were being made, Mr. Fitch sat down on a boulder near the roadway, took out his note-book, and wrote the main dialogue of one of his scenes in "The City." There was no affectation on his part in doing this; it was simply an illustration of the continued exuberance of his inventive powers. And when he was through, he read to us what he had written, and for the rest of the journey the theme of "The City" was criticized from every angle that was worrying

him at the time. We remember a few days before his sailing, he hastily commented on the changes, the close constructions, the more organic drawing together of dialogue in "The City", which he would make on his return in the Fall. Then came the trip, with letters and post cards hastily written on tour, giving instructions as to the assembling of his cast, as to the delivery of the scenery, and as to the exact date of first rehearsals; and then the dire tragedy, which occurred while he was actually *en route* to Cherburg, where he intended to take the steamer for home.

"The City", therefore, was presented to the public without the personal touch of the dramatist, which had meant so much throughout his career to his other plays. It was a sad assembling of the company which took place at the Lyric Theatre, and in the auditorium there sat two or three of Mr. Fitch's friends, invited by the management to be present at the rehearsals, inasmuch as they, through their close contact with the dramatist, would represent in part his personal views, as outlined to them in friendly talk. They knew what he had told them he was going to do, and through their efforts "The City" was finally given in a form which, if it did not wholly accord with the ideas Mr. Fitch would have embodied, at least

reflected in part what he had in mind before he sailed.

On May 23, 1909, we find a reference in a letter written by Mr. Fitch, which shows how deeply "The City" represented his personal point of view. After he had finished the second act, he confessed that he realized he would have to cut the discussions between the two men; but he admitted that he hated to do it, because there was meaning in each word. "I know I will have to," he wrote, "but I will wait and cut as they rehearse." The consequence is that the reading public is being given that significant dialogue, as Mr. Fitch himself liked it. Horrible as the theme of the play is in many ways, it is a most trenchant piece of work; not as subtle in its delineation of character as "The Truth" or "The Girl with the Green Eyes"; equally as melodramatic and theatrical as "The Woman in the Case"; but more powerful than anything he had ever done before.

During the last visit paid to Mr. Fitch, while we were discussing his many activities of the past season, we remember the keen pleasure he showed over the invitations extended to him by the universities to deliver an address, which had grown into considerable proportions from an article, "The Play and the Public", published in a popular magazine. This lecture he had only recently

delivered at Yale and at Harvard, and in many ways he had amended it and improved upon its first form. This corrected manuscript, after the dramatist's death, was mislaid, and it has only recently come to light. We therefore believe that it has an integral part in this Memorial Edition, inasmuch as, aside from its technical truths, it reveals so much of the personality of the author: in the light of a very close observer of plays, players, and playgoers. And as we have had occasion to emphasize the friendship of Mr. Fitch for his friends, we believe that this lecture shows him, in addition, a very earnest friend of the public.

MONTROSE J. MOSES,
VIRGINIA GERSON.

NEW YORK,
JULY, 1915.

THE PLAY AND THE PUBLIC

By Clyde Fitch

I make no pretensions and have no illusions concerning myself or the subject I am about to discuss. I am only a sincere, straightforward person, and what I have to say is only a simple, straightforward talk, — not too idealistic — not profound — not meant to be either — but, on the other hand, neither is it pretentious nor bunkumistic. It is, so to speak, an address in words of one syllable about the theatre, to an audience whose interest and experience must necessarily be youthful, compared with my own old age in the subject. It is, besides, a heart to heart and hand to hand talk, by a man who at least loves both the theatre and the public, and spends most of his time, his strength, and his enthusiasm in doing the best that he can for them.

I've never yet met any one who dreamed their brains were too small to adequately and com-

pletely discuss the theatre, but I've met a great many persons who thought their brains were too big. I don't remember ever having met anyone entirely ignorant of the theatre, who hesitated one moment to walk right in and criticise whole-heartedly, where an educated arch-angel of the drama would perhaps have side-stepped mentally, and felt his way.

Nothing is so good for the drama as intelligent and useful discussion of the theatre. But unfortunately there is on the one hand too much ignorant, or misinformed, or impracticable discussion, too much bunkum "press work," advertising lies, printed and repeated and accepted as true propaganda by amateurs of the drama; and on the other hand there is often a too idealistic or a too iconoclastic point of view by these same sincere and best meaning amateurs, I gladly own. It is difficult to strike a golden mean. Intellectual discussion of the theatre is too often, — I don't say always, mind you, but *too often*, — inclined toward a too narrow and too individualistic point of view — when not actually influenced by ignorance as to the conditions, or unwittingly deceived by false information or flamboyant advertisement. The theatre in America cannot be rightly discussed from any one individual point of view; but only on the

broadest basis and from a universal point of view — perhaps a composite one. For the composition of the audience must be remembered: how it represents every grade of intelligence; and it is only by an appeal to the emotions common with all human nature that this naturally unwieldy body is moulded into one great sounding-board. The emotions of this body are the traps by which we try to take their minds.

It is absolutely necessary for the theatre that the public take a sane and sensible view of the theatre's province — I should say *provinces!* And, in attempting to define its limitations, the public must recognize its own unlimited area of opinion. By this I mean it is more than nonsense to say that the theatre should do *one* thing — because it should do MANY! Individual bodies and individual men lay down the law, ignoring the other individual bodies even at their elbows. And this is another of the reasons for much useless discussion about the theatre. There are girls and boys in the same family, and blondes and brunettes; and in the theatre as a whole there are plays to amuse and plays to instruct, — say a girl tragedy and a boy comedy! A blonde to entertain and a brunette to interest, and a so-called "musical" concoction by way of a red-headed progeny!

But it is the duty of one and all of these plays to be honestly and clearly what they pretend to be. And if each one is this, then it is the duty of their audiences to accept each one for what it is, to criticise it where it fails by being untrue to its own pretensions, but not to criticise it for not being what, perhaps, they wish it were, but what it never pretended to be. I have heard of people who went to see a fine tragedy and came away saying they hadn't been particularly *amused!* And I have known other people who went to a gay little comedy, meant only to tickle the mind, and who came away saying the play had no serious depth! I knew a literary man who, when living, was a real figurehead in the more intelligent life of New York, and he said to me once: "I never go to the theatre because there's nothing fit to see." "How long is it since you've been?" I said. He answered: "Twenty years!" "Then how do you know?" I naturally replied.

The public must go to the theatre and CREATE its own demand, and not only as a matter of its own pleasure, but as a matter of social duty. For depend upon it, if the good public doesn't go, the bad will, and *does!* I think it is more or less of an economic law that the demand creates the supply, and no amount of supply creates its own demand! Ever since

the beginning of civilization, the theatre has been the one great popular form of entertainment and of relaxation. It has changed in form and in kind, but so has its public, and we may take it for granted that the demand has had something to do with the supply. How many people, I wonder, realize the enormous power of the theatre! As a well-known, very much liked, high and broad-minded clergyman in New York said from his pulpit a few years ago: "Eight times a week the theatres get a congregation, two, three and four times as large as I can get once or twice a week; and think what an opportunity to move the better emotions of people, stir their deeper instincts, leaving out altogether the heartsease, and the rest, of good, healthy entertainment." As a matter of fact, a list of what the theatre can do would be almost endless. It can breed patriotism! It can inculcate the love of truth! It can show the disaster inevitable which follows the breaking of the law: moral and civic. It can train the mind to choose the victory of doing the right thing at any sacrifice! It can teach the ethics of life, little and big, *by example*, which is better for the careless multitude than *by precept*. It can and it does do these things. And it can do much that is less heroic and yet fully as useful. It does not belittle the theatre

to say it can send an audience away comforted and refreshed, and this by an appeal to all its better instincts and emotions; nor is it a thing not to be grateful for, that the theatre husbands our twentieth century endangered ideals. It gives to the humblest and the highest of us that touch of romance which, after all, human nature loves, but for which there is little time or opportunity for most of us in the rapid-fire existence and more material life of to-day. But when all is said and done, I repeat, just how great a power the theatre may become is primarily in the hands of the public. It holds in its hands the remedy, the reward, or the punishment. It can come or it can stay away. Those who have the highest interest of the drama in their hearts can offer the best and the truest in them — from grave to gay, from sublime to ridiculous; but if the public allows itself to be ruled by that untamed faction which demands the vulgar, is satisfied with the puerile, or riots in the licentious, then it will probably get what this faction wants, and some of us will retire with our sincere, if practical ideals, to the closet and the bookshelf. Of the theatre, the public is the true censor, and the final critic.

There are two principal divisions of all plays — the Good Play and the Bad Play. Then these

divisions are divided into two again — the Bad Play that draws and the Good Play that does not. Then there are countless subdivisions, and the divisions "on the side." Then by itself, in lonely grandeur, stands the Play That Is Too Good For The Public. Don't you believe it! The Play That Is Too Good For The Public is making the woman's excuse of "Because." The true Big Play makes the universal appeal to the plush minds downstairs and the unupholstered hearts in the gallery. The intellectual play can be good in its kind, — so can the melodrama; you pay your money and you take your choice — unless you are a deadhead. A deadhead, as perhaps you know, is a person who does not pay, but is admitted free. The professional deadhead has, naturally, therefore, no point of view. He sees only the plays that are not good enough to attract whole paying audiences by themselves. I have heard of one honest, unprejudiced, fair-minded deadhead who, after sitting quietly through two very bad acts of a play, himself silent in face of the jeers and sneers of his fellow-audience, finally, in the second entr'act, went out and bought a ticket and his freedom, so that he might hoot and condemn the third act to his heart's content. Alas, the poor deadhead! He is the life-line thrown to a play drown-

ing in a flood of public abuse! — the stomach pump used on a play poisoned by the critics! — the stimulant given a play frozen by the public cold shoulder; and sometimes — the medicine does save a life that's worth while.

To return to the play; the great play, of course, is the one that appeals to both the *mind* and the *heart*. Certain great men have done this. Certain other great men have done half; then their appeal is halved. They satisfy the intellectual on the one side and the rest on the other. Shakespeare did it all — Molière almost — certain Germans a great deal. Goethe, Schiller, and, later, Hauptmann and Sudermann for instance. To-day, Ibsen, with his wonderful fundamental ideas, pleases the intellectual crowd, bores the romanticists, and angers the beauty lovers. Maeterlinck drugs the senses, and delights the mind, and puzzles the popular opinion, and outrages the conventional attitude. Hauptmann and Sudermann satisfy and stimulate the intelligence, and pretty generally put a cogwheel in the box-office — where the tickets are printed in English. All these are, of course, the boldest, the best known examples and instances, and I am using them for that very reason, because I take the fact for granted that I am not speaking to people, the majority of whom have made any

very serious and exhaustive study of the present conditions of the Drama. I am also speaking of these plays in relation to our own general audience — not any special one, of either extreme, — but the typical group of people we find in any or all of our large cities; people who as a whole go to a serious, intellectual, much discussed play, once, perhaps, because it is discussed — and who like it, or those who don't, and wish it thought that they like it, or else at least wish to join in the discussion, — and then go to a successful musical comedy *twice*, to have, as they say, a really good time!

Besides this regulation mainstay audience, there are two others: the small eclectic company, who, as I have already said, are not to be depended upon. They cry out that the theatre is no longer any good, and, staying away, take their own word for it! They demand literature in the theatre, at all cost, ignoring the fact that the first requisite of a *play* is that it be some form of *drama*. For instance, at two different times such a group of people secured backing and started in New York a series of performances which should be literary plays. They secured comedies and dramas from amiable short story writers of deserved repute. They went to the monthly magazines and the publishers for their

popular authors, to give them their material. Why? I really don't know. Both series failed, I am honestly sorry to say, and the cause of a truly artistic and literary theatre was immensely damaged. "If these plays are literature," cried the bored public, "deliver us!!" In the first and most solidly backed venture of the two, which began with a really fine, serious audience by subscription, out of the seven performances of long and short plays, with one exception the short ones were too long, and the long ones not nearly short enough, — and the only play which they produced that lasted and lived as a play was by a professional playwright. I am not holding a high tariff plea for my profession — we have notable instances of literary men who are real dramatists. Take Barrie for instance. But many more dramatists write plays that have value as dramatic literature, than do literary men write plays that are good drama. This same audience has often for its war-cry, "Give the intelligent public which has been driven from the theatre a mental allurement, and they will flock to the standard." I wonder! Bernard Shaw was originally put forward as literature. His first play, "Candida", had to fight for its life through weary, unheeded weeks, till Fashion, hunting about during Lent for some penance to

do, took it up, and the general public followed. Then Bernard Shaw reigned as a "fad" for a season. We all thought then the success was sincere, but, the next Autumn, "Man and Superman" was produced to one of the smaller opening audiences of the theatre-crowded month of October in New York. It was the general public, who, finding the play entertaining, took hold the second and third weeks, and made of that comedy a tremendous success. While it was the notorious Mrs. Warren, with her profession, who drew the first big première audience for Shaw, which fact speaks wonders all around, as well as the incident of the lady who went to buy a ticket for a later Shaw production, "Cashel Byron's Profession" — Cashel being a pugilist — but when told at the box-office in answer to her query that "Cashel Byron's Profession" was not the same as Mrs. Warren's, demanded her money back and left without buying.

There is still another audience, an audience that seems to come from the bowels of the earth. It is only a certain kind of play that brings these people forth. They pack the theatres where "The Christian" played. They flocked in unaccountable numbers to "The Little Minister." They took orthodox delight in "The Shepherd King." They are still the loyal adherents of

"Way Down East" and "Ben Hur." They swell to uncountable numbers the audiences of "The Servant in the House," and are the mainstay of the Ben Greet Players. One wonders where they come from, and where they go to. It is a long-distance trolley audience. They are a class of people who do not habitually go to the playhouse; they are the old-time lyceum lecture bureau audiences. They search for sermons in dramatic stones. It is a fact that a couple of this ilk, who went to the Knickerbocker Theatre when "The Christian" was playing there, in handing their tickets to the usher, absentmindedly asked where their pew was! And, when another play had followed at this same theatre, a man demanded at the box-office two tickets for "The Christian." "But it isn't playing here now," said the ticket seller. "Where is it?" he was asked. "In Newark." "Well, give me two tickets for there!"

The typical general audience, such as I have spoken of, leavened with a little of every class and kind, is the one that the manager dearly loves. They pay for their tickets and demand only a just return. It is a composite gathering, difficult to please from all points of view; a gathering anxious to be amused, satisfied to be interested, willing to be moved, but absolutely

intolerant of being bored. I think it would rather, in the bulk, be entertained by a worthy medium than an unworthy, and it stops to differentiate just about that much. At any rate, it is sincere, this audience, which is more than I can say for some of its managers, actors, actresses, and authors. It says frankly, in effect, that it wants to be entertained, interested; if in an artistic way, so much the better — as witness the great triumph generally of good plays artistically done. But it will not be bored by "art for art's sake," if that art is bunkum and really talk about art for business' sake! This audience is, to use a slang term, "fly." Moreover, it does not pretend it is the only or the ideal audience. It openly confesses there is the big intellectual play for some, but not for all of it. It only asks for itself to choose what it wants. In return it gives you an honest medium to work upon, generous in its approval and applause, when it gets what it wants.

After all, this audience has the right to demand respect and consideration. It has a good disposition, and it doesn't really mind being taught something, either, so long as you sneak in your lesson. Don't let it know what it is taking till the lesson is down, remembering always that the theatre in our day is principally to entertain.

To instruct, we have our universities and schools, our lectures, — even hospitals, clinics, and insane asylums — for certain branches of dramatic instruction. And we must remember, in comparing the modern stage with the old, that in the old days the theatres were the public libraries, but in our time the Carnegies attend to that! You know it is not only in America that this general audience rules. In London, it is even more pleasure-loving; for every one theatre where "prose drama" is given, there have often been five playhouses where the Tune and the Girl reign in successful revolution.

A few years ago Sir Henry Irving, who did more for the artistic development and adornment of the drama, and more for the popularizing of Shakespeare, than any other Englishman living to-day — a few years ago, Sir Henry Irving found the noble, splendid following which had encouraged him and supported him in his work in London, lagging behind, drifting away, dwindling down. And to-day, the famous Lyceum Theatre, where he reached his zenith and crowned his career, after a few years as a variety hall, is housing cheap melodrama, while Irving, during the later years of his life, played short engagements in London, and not even every year. France has much the same story to tell, the same

complaint to make, as to the public taste. In Paris, Antoine, who had made a reputation for himself in his little theatre, has made a failure in his management of the large Odéon, the second subsidized theatre of France, producing plays which he thought would succeed from the literary or artistic ground of appeal. Jeanne Granier, with Lavallaire, and even Pollaire (only several years ago a music-hall star), and the theatres of the Boulevard draw the real crowds. Réjane, with her positive genius, having passed through a period of immense popularity in tart, satirical comedies of life of the demi-monde, and comedies of the *demi* without the *monde* of late, in more serious plays has found it impossible to stay out a season in Paris. Sarah Bernhardt, supreme artist even in her golden age, in her home theatre has had to depend largely upon foreigners and provincials to make her audiences worth while; and to meet the expenses of the Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt, she voyages to far countries where French is little understood and less spoken! She has within the last two years produced at least three literary failures, including "Sister Thérèse" by Catulle Mendès, one of France's best known poets. To be sure, new actresses are taking new places in popularity — notably Madame le Bargy, for whom most of Bernstein's

women rôles have been written, but she is a neurotic type of actress, of extraordinary talent, — still a success above all else of individuality, of something different, something biting to the jaded palate. It is an indisputable fact that the classics at the two state theatres of France draw their largest audiences on *fête days* when *the public is admitted free!* The Française of late years has even "hustled" to add to its repertoire amusing, satirical pieces; several seasons ago giving one comedy which was accused by the critics of being almost a musical comedy. I mention these French and English instances to show that those of us here who love the more serious theatre must not feel that we are so much worse off than Paris or London, so far as the temper and disposition of our audiences are concerned. In Germany and in Austria it is different. There they have a big, serious-minded audience which goes to the play at seven o'clock, with a rested stomach and a free mind. And in Germany they *do* keep alive the fine plays, and create a living repertoire of great ones.

But we are not Germans. It is almost impossible to get us into the theatre before half past eight. Our minds are preoccupied — and so very generally is that other portion of us; the serious task of the theatre is doubled with us. I

have heard men complain, metaphorically speaking, that we did not have pepsin in our plays.

And still, all the same, because, perhaps at the present time more people prefer amusement to serious entertainment, it is no excuse for the futile cry which is constantly being raised that the stage isn't what it used to be. It you take the trouble to search, you will find that cry has always been raised in every age! It was always the Banshee of the Drama! Each period has its fluctuations in taste — each period has its detractors. But in spite of all, the Drama has lived and prospered down and up the centuries!

Do not misunderstand me. I do not in the least mean that I am satisfied with the conditions either as to the Play or the Public. It is almost too obvious to say when any worker is satisfied his work is over. He is finished! He is an *objet d'art* of the Drama! A museum number in the theatre! He is done for! He had better go to the Dramatist's coat-room and hand in his check!

What I mean is that I think it is fair and better to take an optimistic rather than a pessimistic view of the situation. I mean the theatre is not in a bad way; it is on a good way!

Fifteen years ago there were only *two* American dramatists writing American plays with any dis-

tinction. To-day there are at least *six* times as many, worthy of dignified consideration and serious criticism, and at the same time successful. I think *that* speaks for itself and is sufficient cause for my optimism. It is in less time that our universities and colleges have taken up the serious study of the theatre, including its modern literature; and in less time still that clubs and societies with more or less intellectual aims are giving serious consideration to our subject, such as was unheard of a Play Baker's dozen years ago!

I do not say the theatre's task is not difficult, — almost the most difficult I can conceive; but at the same time I am not sure that fact is not in itself the best thing for the theatre. The easy thing to do is seldom the thing worth while. It is the difficult thing, done so well as to make it seem easy of accomplishment, that deserves the real reward. Exercise and struggle are as good for the Drama as for man.

As to a National Theatre, I cannot imagine how there can be any discussion about the value of a playhouse whose aim is to do for the public, what, in the present absence of this theatre, I am begging them to do for themselves. A theatre whose work it would be to bring out and foster the best the Drama is capable of, would

be the most splendid, practical and not merely ideal thing, that could be done for the American stage. There can't be any honest or sincere argument about it. But there is the question of who will direct the fortunes of this theatre; who will design its record, and by whom will that record be made!

There is a new plan now on foot in New York, actually matured and under way, with men at its head who can command our intelligent adherence to their idea, and inspire us with hope for its realization. That is the best help we can give them. The scheme is the surest we have had yet, and not for the least reason because it is practical. That much is up to them, and I myself am for them, and full of hope for their success, in spite of the enormous practical difficulties which I think they only half foresee; but, granted they succeed in starting, then, after all, it is still up to the Public. Yes, as the old-fashioned writers used to say — "Dear Public, it is up to *you!* If the New Theatre gives those among you who are discontented what you want, will you go and be content? If there are not enough of you to make it pay, will you proselyte for the building, and help fill the orchestra seats at two dollars *per* with your friends?" For, believe me, the Germans would not give their

audiences psychological discussions without action, nor the French *their public* the long ethical themes, divided into conversational acts; but that each public wants what is given it, and pays for it. A millionaire's pocket, unfortunately, generous as it is in our country, lacks one splendid quality, that which was possessed by the poor widow's cruse.

To prove the really great play, there is no test except time. For great plays may have faults which at first blind us to their greater merit. It is their faults that make great men human, and why shouldn't it work so with plays? No man can say — true, some do! — this play will last, that will not, — for the power of prophecy went out with the days of the sibylline leaves. And the price our journals pay for knowing the news of the moment is the news of the future.

The plays that have LASTED are valuable to us as literature and as documents. Technique never has kept a play alive through the centuries. Technique alone is machinery, and we improve all machinery year by year. Outside of their literature, outside of their history, imaginative and not scientific, many of Shakespeare's plays are documents of hourly life and manners; and if you are interested in knowing what life was

in town and country before and during the Reformation, read Wycherley, Congreve, Beaumont and Fletcher. You will find there the small human document you won't get out of history *per se*. So Sheridan and Goldsmith reproduced the social Georgian era, Wilde the late Victorian; and in France Lavedan, Hervieu and Capus and Bernstein are giving the Paris and France of the twentieth century for future generations to reproduce for themselves, if they wish.

And the public in America is making that same demand of us. Give us our own life, they are saying in general. We get enough lords and ladies, perfect and imperfect, from England. Give us a man and woman of our own. German provincial life doesn't interest us. See how we welcome and take to our hearts any true reflection of our native country existence. France has played us every tune on her social triangle, till husband and wife and friend have become the barrel-organ of our drama. Show us our own social predicament, and see how we will welcome it. We have troubles of our own, they say. Play us that tune and we will whistle it quickly into popularity. And in the last few years the men who are writing in our country, still digging up the dramatic soil, still laying foundations for the national drama, have re-

sponded, and with so much zeal, so much enthusiasm, so much truth, that to-day, in eight cases out of ten, it is the play of our own life that, each year, takes its strongest hold on the public.

In the modern play, I feel myself very strongly the particular value — a value I can't help feeling inestimable — of reflecting absolutely and truthfully the life and environment about us. Be truthful, and then nothing can be too big, nothing should be too small, so long as it is here, and there. Every class, every kind, every emotion, every motive, every occupation, every business, every idleness! Never was life so varied, so complex; what a choice of material then! Take what strikes you most, in the hope that it will interest others. Take what suits you most to do — what perhaps you can do best — and then do it better. Apart from the question of literature, apart from the question of art, reflect the real thing with true observation and with sincere feeling for what it is and what it represents, and that is art and literature. A play which depicts modern life to-day should be written in the simplest language, with the clippings and cuttings of words habitually made; even perhaps grammatical errors, for only as it truthfully represents modern language can a play of everyday modern life become liter-

ature. In every art, in every profession to-day, the highest standard is truth, and nowhere more surely so than in the Drama — where imagination is truth's ally, not her rival.

If you inculcate an idea in your play, so much the better for your play — and for you — and for your audience. In fact, there is small hope for your play, as a PLAY, if you haven't some small idea in it, somewhere and somehow, even if it is hidden — otherwise your play becomes only an entertainment, and nothing beside. But the idea must, of course, be integral. Some ideas are mechanical. They are no good. These are the ideas for which the author does all the work, instead of letting the ideas do the work for him. One should write what one sees; but observe under the surface. It is a mistake to look at the reflection of the sky in the water of theatrical convention. Instead, look up and into the sky of real life itself.

Of course one can do all this and still have no play. There must, first and last and in the middle, always be the PLAY. That is what the writer who has not his technique misses. The other thing, on the other hand, is so often missed by the technician. The greatest example to-day of the technician and the idea-ist, working together, was Ibsen. But that doesn't mean

Ibsen is a great popular dramatist. He is both with the elect, but not with the general body, because of the other thing he lacked. Wilde was not flawless in his technique, but each play has its inherent idea, and each reflects absolutely in matter and manner that modern social life it represents. Bernard Shaw — well, Bernard Shaw speaks for himself, and PREFERS TO! Pinero has proved himself a master of technique, and so has Henry Arthur Jones, and both men love a play with an idea. Both have, however, been more or less unlucky of late in choosing too often ideas which *they* liked themselves, but for which the *public* very frankly did not care, or in which they refused to be interested. This is one thing a dramatic author has to look out for. He is apt sometimes to become selfish and think only of his own pleasure. Of all the arts and professions, there is none which more strongly demands unselfishness of its followers. The painter may paint a picture which delights himself, and keep it, and have joy in it; it is finished, complete. But there is no such joy for the dramatist who can keep his play! For without production it is incomplete, unfinished — a lifeless thing — still-born; it can never be a joy to him. But to go on with our authors, no one of the dramatists at the present moment

is getting the essence of his environment in thought, word and deed, more than Hervieu, Lavedan, Donnay and Capus, in France. Hervieu with an idea for the basic principle — the idea serious; Lavedan and Donnay, the idea social; Capus, all sorts of ideas together! — any old idea! — so long as it is always life — especially the life superficial, with the undercurrent really kept under. Bernstein stands apart from this group; he is the twentieth century Sardou; that is, he adds to masterly technique a psychological influence in the development of his plot. Mind you, a successful play can be built which is false to life, misrepresenting it, maliciously or through ignorance. But it will not be literature and it will not be art — poor, bedraggled word! It has begun almost to take on the shoddy hues of the word "lady." "Lady" we have replaced with "woman", but our language is not rich enough to give us a word or a phrase even to use instead of much-abused "art." She has become the boarding-house keeper of our vocabulary, who has seen better days.

The term "melodrama" is another sufferer. It has become the personification of the poor, misunderstood person. A mistaken idea prevails, thanks to a too narrow view of the subject

in defining what is true melodrama. The term, centuries ago, and not so long ago as that, was applied to a play of violent emotions, as much as violent actions, and was a technical term implying neither blame nor belittlement. To-day it is applied ignorantly as a term of reproach, to plays of violent emotion, and of belittlement to plays of violent action. If "Macbeth" had been produced yesterday, the bloody fingers of his noble but over-ambitious lady would have traced the word "melodrama" all over the criticisms of the play in this morning's papers. And I dread to think what would have been said of "Hamlet." But I can see in my mind's eye some such headlines, "The New Play — Barring too much talk — thanks to a hero who ought to have been in the Utica Asylum, and a bunch of murderers in the last act, — makes a bully Bowery melodrama."

And let me give you an example of the difference between real melodrama and the false. A business man of good position gets hopelessly lost in financial difficulties, and shoots himself. On the cheap stage, everybody rushes on and shouts and screams, the persecuted hero or heroine gets arrested for murder, and the curtain falls. In real life, and on the true stage, the last loud sound is that of the pistol shot.

The family choke back their cries, and even the servants softly obey whispered orders to close the house and keep out all intruders. It is the absence of the "My Gawds!" and the noisy complications of the "butting in" actors, the non-beating of the theatrical drum, that mark the difference between bathos, crude dramatic emotion, and the real thing. This latter instance is melodrama in the old meaning of the word, but does not deserve the sneer of to-day's interpretation of the term. The incidents, the events of everyday life in a big city are more melodramatic than anything that was ever put upon the stage, but they do not occur with a crescendo accompaniment! They do not have "curtains." There is scarcely a family of importance in any big city that Tragedy has not in some way laid its compelling hand upon, and still the members of the family do not shriek to high heaven when the crisis occurs. On the contrary, they act like human beings; and it is just that same difference which exists between true melodrama of the stage and the cheaper kind. The former is not to be despised, but to be honored. Remember, it is picturing your life of to-day, just as surely as is the quieter domestic drama, and the comedy of character and manners. One cannot live twenty-four hours in any of our cities

without seeing vivid pictures of misery and happiness, vice and virtue, crime and innocence, poverty and wealth, in sharpest, loudest contrast, — a daily life which is blood and iron mixed with soul and sentiment — melodrama of the ancients, pure and simple.

"Realism" is still another sufferer. With two-thirds of the general public, "realism" means something ugly, or horrible, or puerile. A beautiful thing may be portrayed realistically, as well as a brutal thing. Realism is only simplicity and truth. The great effort in the theatre is to create an illusion, both as to practical scenes and as to story. Realism in the emotions of the play and in the paraphernalia of the scenes is the greatest adjunct to both. The one great gift so far of the modern stage is realism, to make up to us for some of the poetry and imagination of which it has robbed us. And yet realism is not opposed to poetry and imagination. Because some people have disliked some form of realism, they have rejected the whole. Because you may not take particular pleasure in seeing an Italian lady in a fit, is no reason to decry seeing some exquisite and deep emotion expressed so realistically as to arouse an echo sweet, for its own sake, in your own soul! As a matter of fact, it is the public themselves,

whether they like it or not, who have created the demand for realism. The audience of to-day knows a great deal. I am not sure it does not know too much. It is not easily deceived nor easily convinced. It does not go to the theatre like the child who delightedly starts to play with "let's pretend" — not at all! It keeps out of the game, and watches others "pretend," never crossing the footlights itself; but from its own vantage ground, criticizes even with its own emotions. It says "Convince us if you can!" and "We dare you to move us!" And it is only when we start out boldly and "take" their dare honestly, by first convincing ourselves, that we win success. One way that a dramatist convinces himself is by letting the characters write his plays for him! It is a positive fact with me, at least, that once I have got my characters created, they must and will follow their own bent, and mould the action of the play. If the reverse were true, and the action moulded the characters, the play is claptrap, machine-made, artificial.

Balzac said real characters in a play or a novel were not myths. He said all his characters were realities. He said that when, in the progress of his "Comédie Humaine", he called into action some character who had figured in a previous novel, that character moved about and

followed his own inclinations in his new environment, precisely as if it were a living being and without any effort whatever, whether of memory or of invention, on the part of his creator. I know by experience one may have serious difficulties with one's characters. Sometimes they will not do in the second act, or in the third act, what was planned for them and expected of them while writing the first. Once a character is clearly created, once it becomes a fixed entity, it dominates you and your plan, and must be allowed its own way. It must be consistent. In my plays I endeavor that the action shall develop from inward outward. The development is the natural result, as far as my equipment can make it so, of the impulses which lie in the hearts and minds of the characters as they have been conceived.

For those who wish to place life as they find it and see it on the stage, the great practical power, a necessity, is the faculty of observation. But this power alone makes photography. The palette and brush are tools of a higher art than the Kodak. And it is the power of Imagination which makes the difference — which scales the heights. So it is with playwriting. Observation will press the button and Imagination will do the rest.

Of course every writer of novels or of plays works in his own way. I do not believe that any writer of value can work in any other man's way, or according to any other formula or method than his own. The mental process is too complex and hereditary; individuality and individual experience play too large a part. Dumas *fils* prefaced nearly every one of his plays in the published edition with an elaborate foreword telling how he had written it, and discussing the artistic and social questions to which it gave rise. Many other authors and playwrights, in printed interviews or books, have tried to show the mental machinery of their invention. These personal confessions, or revelations, are possibly more interesting than instructive. They are like the "experiences" related on the front bench of a revival meeting, each of which is so different from its fellow experience, and creates interest accordingly. But if their value is autobiographical rather than educational, they still establish the principle that each man reaches success in his profession, or salvation in religion, in his own particular way.

And the play's moral! It should grow out of the play's theme. The moral should never be pasted on like a label. No author should dogmatically preach; the artist is the man who

suggests to those who have ears to hear and eyes with which to see. The moral should not be the cause of the play; it should be the result of the play. I hope my distinction is plain to you, because I think in it lies the whole question of the morality of the stage.

No severer test should be applied to the theatre than to the library. We have the Press interested in the theatre, and it is a fair and popular guide. The Press chaperones and protects the "young person." Certain subjects, certain things are not tolerated in any decent society, and the stage is a part of that society; but to condemn a play because bad people appear in it, to condemn a play because the subject of immorality is seriously treated in it, is false morality. Does the result of the play sicken and disgust you with the wrong thing, frighten you with the inevitable result of breaking the laws or the commandments? If it does, it is a moral play, even though it may not be an ideal *vade mecum* for the matinée girl. Personally I love the matinée girl! She believes in youthful love, ideals, self-sacrifices, and I want to. She believes in romance in real life — I want to. And she is no fool. She is quick with her ridicule, ever ready with her discernment of what is true and what is stage pretense. But granting all her charms and her

intelligence, I still do not think she should rule the playhouse. As a matter of fact, she is growing to be an obsolete character! Conditions are such that it is more often mother and father who go to the matinée now; she goes in the evening!

For my part, I believe the true moral of the theatre consists in this: that the audience shall get from a play the mental and moral "lift up", instead of the "let down." And to this end, not only theme and plot, but also character creation plays a strong part. By that strange law which makes one note in the piano sing in response to a vibrating tuning fork many feet away, the hearts of the audience vibrate in unison with the vibrating hearts across the footlights. The sweeter and truer and more exalted the note struck upon the stage, the more readily does the audience respond. This is the great force exercised by fiction in which the drama shares. And to arouse these feelings in an audience, even for a short period, has, I believe, a better, more practical, more salutary effect upon them as men and women, than can be obtained by any philosophic appeal made to their intellects in the cut and dried form of a presented theme or moral. It is a goal worth striving for.

To tell a story which shall stir the deeper emo-

tions, stimulate the intellect, and tend to ennoble the mind is a higher goal still. And as to "Art", there have been many definitions, but the untheatrical Wordsworth said: "That is good art which makes the beholder wiser, better or happier."

This may be regarded as a somewhat vague definition for the theatre, but is it not good enough for all of us to go on with?

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THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

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THE WOMAN IN THE CASE

ACT I. At the Rolfes'.

"I love you, first, last and always. You represent life in this world to me."

ACT II. Visitors' Room in the Tombs.

Three Weeks Later.

"My faith in him is more than human; it comes from my soul, — and you know in our soul lives whatever there is of divine in us."

ACT III. An Apartment in West 52d Street.

Two Months Later.

"Will you men never understand what a woman can undergo for the man she loves! Men endure physical torture for our sakes, which our bodies refuse to support; but we make it up in what we can endure mentally and spiritually for you."

ACT IV. At the Rolfes'.

One Week Later.

Place. New York City.
Time. The Present.

THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MARGARET ROLFE.

MRS. HUGHES. *Her mother.*

CLAIRE FORSTER.

ELSIE BREWSTER.

DORA MILLER.

LOUISE MANE.

MAID.

JULIAN ROLFE.

TOMPSON.

JIMMY O'NEILL.

LOUIS KLAUFFSKY.

WALTERS. *Servant to the Rolfes.*

INSPECTOR WILLIAMS.

ATTENDANT.

POLICEMAN.

Produced on January 30, 1905, at the Herald Square Theatre, New York, with the following cast:

Margaret Rolfe	Blanche Walsh
Mrs. Hughes	Eleanor Carey
Claire Forster	Dorothy Dorr
Elsie Brewster	Kathryn Keyes
Dora Miller	Helen Ware
Louise Mane	Florence St. Leonard
Maid	Ethlyn Clemens
Julian Rolfe	Robert Drouet
Tompson	George Fawcett
Jimmy O'Neill	Forster Lardner
Louis Klauffsky	Samuel Edwards
Walters	William Wadsworth
Inspector Williams	William Travers
Attendant	Charles Macdonald
Policeman	W. H. Wright

Produced at the Garrick Theatre, London, on June 2, 1909, with the following cast:

Margaret Rolfe	Grace Lane
Mrs. Hughes	Kate Serjeantson
Claire Forster	Violet Vanbrugh
Elsie Brewster	Eva Killick
Dora Miller	Enid Sass
Louise Mane	Sybil Grey
Julian Rolfe	Herbert Sleath
Tompson	Charles V. France
Jimmy O'Neill	Frank Tennant
Louis Klauffsky	E. Dagnall
Walters	Cecil Yapp
Inspector Williams	Henry Hare

Attendant, Policeman, Maid.

The play was produced by Mr. Allan Aynesworth.

ACT I

SCENE: *At the Rolfes'. A very charming drawing-room in a New York apartment, at the end of dinner.*

JULIAN ROLFE, *a handsome man of thirty-four, enters, and holds the door open for three ladies to pass into the drawing-room from the dining room,* — DORA, LOUISE, *and* ELSIE, — *young, pretty, and very smartly dressed. They were the bridesmaids at his wedding three months before the opening of the play.*

JULIAN. Make the most of your freedom. I warn you, we men won't keep away very long.

DORA. [*Sitting on the sofa.*] *See* that you don't! Remember we are leaving very early,

because you are really an invalid, and shouldn't keep late hours.

JULIAN. Nonsense! I'm well enough, now! Why, I hope to go out to-morrow.

LOUISE. [*Sitting on the sofa beside* DORA.] That's all very well, but you — a man who's had pneumonia and hasn't been out yet! The truth is, we ought all to have regretted this party.

JULIAN. Then neither Margaret nor I would ever have forgiven you. And the next time we got married, we'd have engaged an entirely new set of bridesmaids!

[*They all laugh.*

ELSIE. When Margaret comes back, send her in to us, won't you? Don't you men keep her with you.

JULIAN. I promise to deny ourselves for your sakes, if she gives me the chance; but she will

probably join you here herself, when she finishes with this newspaper man.

ELSIE. What a thing it is to get married and be interviewed by the papers!

JULIAN. Oh, but we're an old married couple, now.

DORA. [*Laughing.*] Three months!

ELSIE. *I* consider you still in the tunnel — "us-two-alone-away-from-everybody" period.

JULIAN. [*Laughing.*] Nonsense!

[*Starts to go.*

DORA. Tell the men not to forget that we *must leave* here at nine-thirty, in any case. You know, we're rehearsing a minuet for Mrs. Warner's fancy dress ball.

LOUISE. Wish you and Margaret could come.

JULIAN. I'm afraid we can't! Our fancy dress just *now* must be Darby and Joan!

[WALTERS *enters at Right with coffee, and passes it. All take it, except* ELSIE.

JULIAN. Well, excuse me.

[*Goes out.*

LOUISE. He looks pretty well for a man who's been so fearfully ill.

DORA. Yes. You know, poor Margaret says they never thought they would save him.

LOUISE. He'll have to be careful for a long time, won't he?

DORA. Rather! A relapse would be a very dangerous thing!

LOUISE. What in the world can a reporter want of her all this time?

ELSIE. [*Beginning to drum popular songs on the piano.*] And just at dinner! I wonder!

LOUISE. Shall I take a cup for her?

DORA. I would.

[LOUISE *puts aside a cup of coffee for* MARGARET.

DORA. What a nice idea to have a bridesmaids' dinner all over again — after the fatal deed is done!

ELSIE. Yes; it sort of stamps the thing a success!

LOUISE. My dear, I don't think I ever knew a happier marriage than Margaret's and Julian's.

DORA. They're so congenial — like the same things. Both are music mad, and they've both a sense of humor. Besides, she's the dearest girl in the world, anyway!

LOUISE. [*Putting her cup on the table.*] And everyone says no one has ever made so many friends in so short a time as Julian has since he came here to live.

DORA. How long is it?

LOUISE. Only three or four years.

[WALTERS *enters with liqueurs, which he passes.*

DORA. Of course his being a college chum of Philip Long's gave him all Philip's friends at once. He really owed his position here in New York to Philip.

LOUISE. As a doctor, do you mean?

DORA. Oh, no! They say he'd already made a name for himself in his profession, in Cincinnati, before he came to New York. I mean socially.

ELSIE. [*Stops playing.*] Didn't you feel awfully queer when he proposed the toast to Philip?

LOUISE. What was it he said? I didn't take it in, I was so surprised.

DORA. "Let's drink to the memory of one whom I am sure we all miss to-night, and more than I, for one, can say. To the dear memory

of my best man, and my best friend, Philip Long!"

LOUISE. You know, it's the first time I ever knew any one who was murdered. They always seem to belong to a different class.

ELSIE. Yes. You know, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was very smart to get murdered, but nowadays it isn't at all the thing in smart society!

LOUISE. My dear Elsie!

ELSIE. Yes, that was horrid of me. I'm sorry!

DORA. I am perfectly convinced it was suicide.

LOUISE. Lots of people think it would have been much more sensible of the Longs to have let the whole thing die down.

DORA. But you know what old Mr. Long's like. Nothing would persuade him to let the

ignominy of suicide rest on his son's name. He is determined it is murder, and that he'll prove it.

ELSIE. Does any one know what Mr. Rolfe thinks?

[*A moment's pause.*

DORA. We might ask Margaret.

LOUISE. No! I hate to talk about it, especially to-night. It'll depress us all!

DORA. What a lovely wedding it was, wasn't it?

ELSIE. Lovely!

[*Her fingers running into a sentimental ballad on the piano.*

DORA. But, if you remember, Philip Long was a little *distrait*. I remember some one joking him about it.

LOUISE. How could he have been in love with such an awful creature?

ELSIE. My dear! Don't fly in the face of Providence by questioning why men fall in love with any of us. Be grateful that they do, and let it go at that!

[*They all laugh.*

DORA. They say she's pretty — or used to be, — and is very clever and attractive.

[ELSIE *stops playing.*

LOUISE. My brother says Philip was always rather weak, and couldn't resist any temptation. If he got with a crowd of men who drank, he always drank too much; and if he got with a crowd who played cards, he gambled too high, and lost. And almost any girl who tried, could do what she liked with him.

ELSIE. Mercy! Wish *I'd* known that!

LOUISE. [*Laughing.*] Elsie!

DORA. That was exactly the basis of Mr.

Rolfe's and Philip's friendship. He took hold of Phil, and kept him straight.

ELSIE. Well, *do* let's talk of something else, or we'll have an awful evening!

DORA. [*Insinuatingly.*] Suppose we talk about Jimmy O'Neill.

ELSIE. Please *don't!*

[*She turns to the piano and plays again.*

DORA. You are not engaged to Jimmy O'Neill.

ELSIE. I am not!!

DORA. Then you ought to be ashamed of yourself!

ELSIE. Why?

DORA. Because you carry on disgracefully with him.

ELSIE. Oh, well, *he's engaged to me*, but *I* am not engaged to him.

DORA. Oh, *that's* a new way to look at it!

LOUISE. No two people could see as much of each other as you two, without being bored to death, unless they were in love.

ELSIE. We have an intellectual friendship!

DORA. Oh, I see! Well, when you *are* married, I'll give you a set of encyclopedias for a wedding present.

LOUISE. And I'll get you a complete edition of the "Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire" at Wanamaker's.

[*All laugh as* MARGARET *enters.*

MARGARET. I'm glad you're having such an amusing time!

DORA. Elsie says she has an intellectual friendship with Jimmy O'Neill!

MARGARET. Well! I've heard it called a good many things, but never that before! [*Sitting down with them.* DORA *gets the coffee from*

the table, and offers it to MARGARET.] No, thanks.

LOUISE. What did the reporter want, Margaret?

MARGARET. He wanted to know if I'd seen his evening paper, and when I said I hadn't, he wanted me to talk about Philip Long. Of course I wouldn't, but I had the greatest trouble in the world getting rid of him!

DORA. My dear, your apartment is too charming for anything! I never knew a young married couple with so few hideous things!

ELSIE. Yes, — where are all your wedding presents?

MARGARET. In the *Chamber of Horrors!*

ELSIE. How do you mean?

MARGARET. That's what we call the library, where we've put all the impossible gifts.

DORA. [*Leaning over the piano.*] Do take us there, and let's see them.

ELSIE. [*Rising.*] If I find *mine!!*

MARGARET. Oh, don't worry, yours is in *my* room. It's a rule that the gifts of guests are always brought out and put somewhere else, when we *know* they're coming!

[*They all laugh.*

ELSIE. Splendid idea!

DORA. But suppose some one comes unexpectedly, and doesn't see their present here, aren't they hurt?

MARGARET. [*Rising.*] Oh, no! I take them at once to the library, and show it to them in the *room* of *honor*, as it were. Of course I wouldn't hurt any one's feelings for anything, especially any one who had been kind enough to remember me on the happiest day of my life — my wedding-day.

[WALTERS *enters, and announces* MR. TOMPSON, *a lawyer,—a good-looking man about forty-five years old, who enters.*

TOMPSON. Good evening, Mrs. Rolfe! I'm afraid I'm rather in the way!

[*General greeting.*

MARGARET. Not at all. We're just going up to the library to see my wedding presents; the beautiful lamp *you gave me is there;* you must come and see it!

[*The others mark this with secret amusement.*

ELSIE. [*Mischievously.*] Is my present there, Margaret?

MARGARET. [*Also mischievously.*] No, it *usually is*, but it was taken out this evening, just before you came, *for some reason or other.*

[*All laugh.*

TOMPSON. What's the joke?

MARGARET. Oh, nothing! Come along.

TOMPSON. No, — would you mind taking the young ladies, and coming back to me for a moment. I just want five minutes with you.

MARGARET. Something serious?

TOMPSON. [*Covering the truth.*] Oh, no, no!

MARGARET. Come, girls.

[*All going out.*

ELSIE. [*Turning back.*] We'll tell you just how your lamp looks when we come back, Mr. Tompson!

TOMPSON. Thanks.

[*He rings an electric bell by the mantel.*

MARGARET. I'll be back in a moment.

[*They go out.*

[TOMPSON *goes to the lamp, takes out an evening paper, and reads it. He is evidently nervous and worried. Enter* WALTERS *at Right.*

As he enters, TOMPSON *quickly hides the paper behind his back.*

WALTERS. Did you ring, sir?

TOMPSON. Yes, Walters. Is there an evening paper in the house?

WALTERS. I don't know, sir. Mr. Rolfe sometimes brings one home, and sometimes doesn't. I haven't seen one this evening, sir.

TOMPSON. The servants have none?

WALTERS. No, sir. Having a dinner party on, we've none of us been out, sir.

TOMPSON. Well, open the hall door, and tell Mrs. Rolfe's mother, Mrs. Hughes, who is waiting there, to come in. We don't want the guests to know she is here.

WALTERS. [*Looking surprised.*] Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*

[TOMPSON *crosses the room to the sofa, watching*

the door. MRS. HUGHES *enters. She is a handsome, well-preserved woman of fifty-four.*

MRS. HUGHES. Are they still in the dining room?

TOMPSON. No, — only Julian and the men. Your daughter has taken her guests to see the wedding presents, but she'll be back at once.

MRS. HUGHES. Do you think she's seen the paper?

TOMPSON. I don't know — the servants haven't.

[*Enter* MARGARET.

MARGARET. [*Surprised.*] Why, mother! Does Julian know — is anything the matter?

[*Going to her, and taking her hand.*

MRS. HUGHES. Shall we tell her?

TOMPSON. My dear Madam, isn't that what you brought me here to do?

MRS. HUGHES. Yes. You see, Margaret, Mrs. Mane brought it to me. John had brought it home to her, — not her husband, — her son, I mean, — and he'd seen it in the train by accident, on his way up town —

MARGARET. [*Alarmed and curious.*] Seen *what?*

[*Looking from her mother to* TOMPSON.

MRS. HUGHES. My dear, I'm telling you! She said she thought I ought to see it at once. And you can imagine what a state it put me into!

MARGARET. [*More alarmed.*] No, I can't! I can't, because you don't tell me what it is, mother.

MRS. HUGHES. Why — [*Stops.*] It's — [*Hesitates.*] It's an awful article in an evening paper. I say it's libellous. I went at once to Mr. Tompson, didn't I? — [TOMPSON *bows assent, as she*

doesn't wait for him to speak] and said you must come at once to her? The woman is a most dangerous person, evidently, who will stop at nothing. I think she's at the bottom of it all. Mr. Tompson won't say, but I tell him it takes a woman to catch a woman. Don't you agree with me, Margaret?

MARGARET. [*Desperate.*] Mother, if you'll only tell me what it all is!

MRS. HUGHES. I thought I had — I've been trying to.

TOMPSON. [*Giving* MARGARET *the paper.*] Read for yourself. It's better.

[MARGARET *takes the paper to the lamp.*

MRS. HUGHES. [*To* TOMPSON.] What have you decided?

TOMPSON. I can decide nothing till I see Julian.

MARGARET. [*Looking up from the paper.*] A reporter was here and asked me if I'd read this.

[TOMPSON *shows interest.*

MRS. HUGHES. I hope you told him you hadn't!

MARGARET. Of course, because I hadn't.

[*Reads on.*

MRS. HUGHES. I'm glad you told him so, anyway. Mr. Tompson thinks it may be best to ignore the whole thing. But I tell him — still I don't know — what —

MARGARET. [*Interrupting.*] But this is absurd! Julian could only have known Philip Long's mistress through Philip.

MRS. HUGHES. Exactly what I say! I believe in suing the paper.

MARGARET. [*Doubtingly.*] Love letter from Julian calling her "Darling Claire"!

MRS. HUGHES. So they say, and found in her desk!

MARGARET. Oh, this is some sensational story! It'll all be disproved in the morning.

MRS. HUGHES. That's just what I think, and we'd better ignore the whole thing! [*To* TOMPSON.] You see! [*To* MARGARET.] He didn't want me to come to you at all! He wanted to go to Julian privately. But I said I wasn't going to have your married life begun with secrets. [*To* TOMPSON.] I agree with Margaret, — the whole thing will blow over in the morning.

MARGARET. [*Putting aside the paper.*] Ah, I won't read any more! I don't believe a word of it, and it'll only make me angry and miserable, — and Julian too! [*To* MRS. HUGHES.] Don't show this to him.

TOMPSON. Oh, but we must! Others would

speak of it to him, if we didn't, and it's only right he should hear of it from us.

MRS. HUGHES. Yes, I must say, Margaret, I agree with Mr. Tompson.

MARGARET. Julian! The soul of honor!

MRS. HUGHES. Oh, yes, — silly about telling the truth, even when a boy. I never could make him see there were lies and *lies!*

MARGARET. Why, Mr. Tompson, the idea that Julian could want to steal this woman from Philip, and at the very time that he was asking me to marry him! Oh! Oh! It's too preposterous even for his enemies, if he has any, to believe! Julian, who has given me three of the most beautiful months that ever any woman was blessed with! Julian, who has shown me more truth and beauty and goodness in the world than ever I, in my most innocent girlhood,

dreamed were there! Julian, a man loved by all the men he's come in contact with! Julian!! *My* Julian! Oh! If it wasn't so terrible a thing to say, even when not true, [*half hysterically*] I'd *laugh!*

[*She tears the paper in two.*

TOMPSON. Don't, please! [*He is too late.*] I wanted to show that to Julian, all the same!

MARGARET. [*Giving him the pieces.*] Tell him in a few words, if you like, but don't make him read through that brutal story. Remember how ill he's been, — and really it isn't necessary.

[*She rings the electric bell.*

MRS. HUGHES. Margaret's right!

MARGARET. I'll send for Julian, and you see him alone. I'm sure it would make him feel worse about it, to have me here. I'd rather he didn't know I knew anything about it, if you

can arrange it so. Come, mother. You and I will take the men up to the library.

MRS. HUGHES. Oh, my dear, among the horrors!

TOMPSON. What horrors?

MRS. HUGHES. The misfit wedding presents; they're all there!

[*Laughing.* TOMPSON *laughs too.*

MARGARET. Not *all.* Mr. Tompson's lamp is there, mother.

MRS. HUGHES. [*Saving herself.*] The one that gives such a splendid light?

MARGARET. *Exactly!*

TOMPSON. Well done!

[JIMMY O'NEILL *comes in from the dining room.*

O'NEILL. I say, — we're bored in there. Can't we join you, now? Oh, excuse me, — I didn't

know you had other guests. Good evening, Mrs. Hughes.

MRS. HUGHES. Good evening, Jimmy.

O'NEILL. [*To* TOMPSON.] How do you do?

TOMPSON. Good evening, Mr. O'Neill.

O'NEILL. Where's Elsie and the rest of the little lot?

MARGARET. Gone up to the library. You bring the men up there to join us.

[*Enter* WALTERS.

O'NEILL. All right.

[*Goes out.*

MARGARET. Walters, tell Mr. Rolfe Mr. Tompson wishes to see him here a moment.

WALTERS. Yes, Madam.

[*He exits.*

TOMPSON. Is Mr. Rolfe entirely recovered?

MARGARET. Well, he's wonderfully better!

And he *would* have our little dinner to-night. But the doctor forbids his going to the office yet.

MRS. HUGHES. The doctor's quite right.

TOMPSON. I suppose it's hard for Rolfe to keep idle.

MARGARET. Oh, awfully! He'd disobey the doctor, if he dared. But he feels still the slightest exertion, and any strain or extra effort would really be serious. You see, he has no strength to fight a relapse with.

MRS. HUGHES. Of course, you know, he seems perfectly well to me.

MARGARET. He will be, soon. He's to go out to-morrow. Don't let this worry him, — will you, Mr. Tompson?

TOMPSON. No, indeed, no more than I can help.

MARGARET. [*To* MRS. HUGHES.] Come along, mother!

MRS. HUGHES. But I'm not dressed.

MARGARET. Nonsense! You talk like Lady Godiva. Come along. [*Going to the door,* MRS. HUGHES *following her.*] Julian will snap his fingers at that article, I'm sure, Mr. Tompson.

[*Both go out.*

[TOMPSON *picks up the pieces of paper, and is putting them together, as* JULIAN *enters, smoking a cigar.* TOMPSON *places the papers on the piano, and joins the two pieces, leaving them there.*

JULIAN. Hello, Tompson!

TOMPSON. [*Going toward him.*] How are you, Rolfe? Glad to hear you're so much better.

JULIAN. Oh, yes, I'm all right now, — or will be, once they let me out, and I'm at work. But you know what doctors and wives are.

TOMPSON. Yes, I know! Life preservers.

JULIAN. True! Well, what can I do for *you?*

[*Sits on the sofa;* TOMPSON *sits down beside him.*

TOMPSON. [*Embarrassed.*] Well — er —

JULIAN. By George! What's the matter? You behave as if you wanted a loan! With pleasure, my dear man, — anything in the world. Ask me for anything — *except my wife* — and with nothing but her I'd be the *richest man you know!*

TOMPSON. [*Smiling.*] You make an old bachelor like me feel pretty much out of it! No, it's not money. There's — er — There's a scandalous article in an evening paper about Philip Long and Claire Forster —

JULIAN. Poor old Philip, — even death didn't get him out of his troubles!

TOMPSON. [*Continuing.*] *And about you.*

JULIAN. [*As if he didn't quite follow.*] What?

TOMPSON. The scandal in the article doesn't really concern Philip; it has to do with *you.*

JULIAN. [*Very quietly, and smoking.*] How do you mean?

TOMPSON. You know, the Long family will not accept the idea of suicide.

JULIAN. Yes.

TOMPSON. And they are bound to leave no stone unturned to explain what they call the mystery of Philip's death.

JULIAN. I know.

TOMPSON. They are urging the police on, and are employing detectives of their own.

JULIAN. Yes!

TOMPSON. And now some of the Press are with them, and take the family's view.

JULIAN. Yes!

TOMPSON. Well, to-night, one of these papers comes out, suggesting — insinuating — that *you* killed Philip Long —

JULIAN. *I!* Dear old Philip! I loved him like a twin brother!

TOMPSON. The motive hinted at is jealousy of the woman.

JULIAN. Ridiculous! I was the woman's greatest enemy. And if I weren't, leaving out my mother, there's only one woman in creation for me — and that's Margaret — the woman I made my wife only one week before the tragic undoing of poor old Phil!

TOMPSON. [*Going to the piano, and glancing down at the paper.*] The paper states it has secured information that the detectives have found, in Claire Forster's flat, proof that you were the woman's lover.

JULIAN. [*Angry and stern, rises.*] It's a lie!

TOMPSON. The writer of the paper claims to have seen letters from you to her.

[*A change comes over* JULIAN; *he puts his cigar on the tray on the table, and he sits back, thoughtfully and without anger. A moment's pause.*

JULIAN. Letters?

TOMPSON. Love letters!

JULIAN. But old ones! Three years old!

TOMPSON. [*Astonished, and with a note of alarm in his voice.*] What! There are letters? Love letters of yours to her?

JULIAN. There might be a few — old ones, if she kept them.

TOMPSON. Kept them!! *Of course* she kept them! Letters are those women's certificates of stock!

JULIAN. But there's nothing incriminating in those letters.

TOMPSON. [*Drawing up a chair beside the sofa.*] How do you know? Do you remember what is in them?

JULIAN. [*With a half laugh, half sneer.*] Hardly! Three years ago, — long before I had ever seen Margaret — for ten days, I thought I was in love with Claire Forster. I picked her out of a sextette, or double octette — or coon chorus, or something! And she took me in. I was more or less of a country boy, and new at the game!

TOMPSON. But —

JULIAN. There's no "but" about it. In ten days I found out just what she was. Her whole nature drew her back into the street; nothing could save her. My decency bored her, thank

God! She had an itch for vice that nothing could cure!

TOMPSON. Are your letters dated?

JULIAN. Likely not. I'm apt just to write only the day of the week at the head of a letter. I don't know and I don't care! That was ages ago. There may be three, there may be four. But they can only make me seem like a fool, — not like a criminal!

TOMPSON. Did Philip know about this?

JULIAN. Yes, I told him the whole thing when I prevented him marrying her.

TOMPSON. When was that?

JULIAN. The day after Margaret and I came back from our honeymoon. But don't let's talk any more about it.

[*Rises, crosses to the piano, and touches the keys.*

TOMPSON. We must; you may have trouble!

JULIAN. Nonsense!

TOMPSON. How did you prevent the marriage?

JULIAN. [*Turns and faces him.*] Showed her up, of course. She'd taken him in good! Won his sympathy, made him believe he was the only man who had moved her better nature.

TOMPSON. Perhaps that was true!

JULIAN. True? Bah! When she'd practically ruined him! Turned him into a drunkard!

TOMPSON. You knew they were intimate?

JULIAN. I knew he was mad about her, but thought he'd find her out, as I did. But he was too much in love. I told him my experience; I told him others I knew of. I told him she was tired of the gutter, and wanted to try respectability at any sacrifice, even of him, but that the old itch would come back. And that when she'd

wrung him dry and sodden, she'd go back to the pavement!

TOMPSON. Well?

JULIAN. He wouldn't believe me! He as good as told me I lied. He asked me to accuse her to her face, — and I did!

[*He takes out a cigar, and clips the end.*

TOMPSON. You did?

JULIAN. Yes, the next night, the night he — died.

[*Takes a match.*

TOMPSON. At his rooms?

JULIAN. Yes.

[*He strikes the match.*

TOMPSON. What did she do?

JULIAN. [*Lighting his cigar.*] Fought to keep him, of course; lied first, and was weak; and then she was strong and indignant. But I

fought, too! Telling him first what she had already done for him, and what more she would do. I asked him what she had so far done for his character; what, with his ideals of life, with his habits even! I asked him if he would take Claire Forster home to be a daughter to his old mother! I said everything I could think of, till she lost her control completely, and gave herself dead away with a hysterical rage of low language that more than proved all I said. There are women like that! If you can once get them started, they lose their heads, and nothing stops them, even if it means their own ruin!

TOMPSON. Then what happened?

JULIAN. He gave me his word not to marry her, and asked me to leave them alone. I did. It was about midnight. He shot himself that morning, early.

TOMPSON. How she must hate you!

JULIAN. [*With a shrug.*] Very probably!

TOMPSON. She'll surely stop at nothing by way of revenge.

JULIAN. Between her and me there's a whole world, Tompson! She can't harm me, let her try all she wants.

TOMPSON. You could turn the evidence against her — frighten her by accusing her of the murder —

JULIAN. No motive!

TOMPSON. A quarrel.

JULIAN. No evidence strong enough — no — She wanted him living, not dead, — that's self-evident.

TOMPSON. And what about this article?

JULIAN. Nothing. Ignore it!

TOMPSON. But if the police —

JULIAN. [*Interrupting.*] My dear old friend, — don't be absurd; you are romancing. I am only sorry that my letters should be spoken of, because I must tell Margaret the story, and I'd have rather spared her, — that's all.

TOMPSON. She has read the article.

JULIAN. Well, I'm sure it made no impression on her?

TOMPSON. No, she was only afraid you would be annoyed.

JULIAN. To-morrow, some other paper will have a new story, and this will be forgotten.

TOMPSON. Very probably. But it's best, in any case, that I should have had this explanation with you.

JULIAN. Why?

TOMPSON. [*Rising.*] Well, you see, if your letters are undated, and if this woman wants

to make trouble, and if the police wish to make out a case somehow — [*Sits down again.*] Have you any proofs?

JULIAN. Of what?

TOMPSON. That you've had nothing to do with Miss Forster for years.

JULIAN. I've the proof of my word, of my love for my wife, of her confidence in me.

TOMPSON. And mine in you! I believe all you have said, implicitly. But you would have to prove it practically for a criminal court.

JULIAN. [*Laughs and rises.*] Tompson, don't you worry! "Shop" is carrying you away.

[*Enter* MARGARET *and* MRS. HUGHES.

MARGARET. Julian, they're all going to Mrs. Warner's for a rehearsal of their dance, you know.

JULIAN. [*Going toward the door.*] Where are they? In the library?

MARGARET. No, down in the hall.

[JULIAN *goes out, and is greeted with a chorus of the three girls at once.*

ELSIE. You're a nice man to sneak away!

DORA. You will deign to come and say good-by to us.

LOUISE. Won't you change your mind and bring Margaret?

} [*Together.*

[*Door is heard shutting outside.*

MARGARET. Did you tell him?

TOMPSON. Yes, and he ridiculed taking any notice of the article.

MRS. HUGHES. As I told you he would!

TOMPSON. [*To* MARGARET.] He was only worried for fear it would cause you annoyance.

MARGARET. Dear old Julian!

MRS. HUGHES. Well, of course, Margaret,

you didn't expect him to feel otherwise, did you?

MARGARET. I didn't "expect" anything, mother, because I knew he would feel whatever was right.

MRS. HUGHES. Really, Mr. Tompson, we've had all our trouble for nothing, and upset both our evenings. I was so comfy with everything tight down, and my hair off —

MARGARET. [*Laughing.*] What?

MRS. HUGHES. I mean my hair down and everything tight off, — and was going to have a restful evening. I wish I were back home. I didn't want to come, anyway!

TOMPSON. Well, that's pretty good, considering you came after me, and made me bring you!

MRS. HUGHES. Did I?

TOMPSON. Emphatically you *did!*

MRS. HUGHES. Oh, well, then it was because I thought it was my duty; but I didn't believe in doing it, all the same.

MARGARET. Well, now, mother darling, listen. Don't worry over Julian and me. You know, really, I'm sure Julian won't have it! He is perfectly capable of taking care of himself and me, and you into the bargain, if necessary.

MRS. HUGHES. But, my dear, I'm not happy unless I'm worrying over some one.

MARGARET. Then get married again, darling!

MRS. HUGHES. I've half a mind to; it's so lonely without you! What do you think, Mr. Tompson?

TOMPSON. Is that a proposal?

MRS. HUGHES. Oh, dear no! [*Laughing.*] If I should re-marry, it would be to some nice, weak man, like a genius, or an unlucky speculator, —

some one who wanted to be worried over and looked after, — not a big, successful lawyer like you!

JULIAN. [*Coming back, gaily.*] Well, they've gone!

TOMPSON. You don't sound sorry.

JULIAN. Who isn't sorry! Oh yes, of course, mighty nice crowd!

MRS. HUGHES. Well, don't be angry — but I really must go, too, now!

[MARGARET *and* JULIAN *exchange amused glances.* MARGARET *rings electric bell.*

TOMPSON. [*With a wink at* JULIAN.] Don't you think it's a pity to leave Julian and Margaret all alone the best part of the evening?

MRS. HUGHES. Yes, I'm awfully sorry!

MARGARET. [*Laughing.*] Really!

MRS. HUGHES. But I must go home. I'm reading that new historical novel, and am at

such an exciting part! The heroine's just disguised herself as a man, and I want to finish the book if I can, to-night. You know, she generally does that two-thirds through. [MARGARET *going up to her.*] Good-by, dear! [*Kissing her.*] I've had a lovely time! I mean — I'm glad everything's all right. What did we come over here for, anyway?

[*Turning to* TOMPSON.

MARGARET. Nothing of importance, mother.

MRS. HUGHES. Of course, that's what I told him!

[*Enter* WALTERS.

MARGARET. Mrs. Hughes and Mr. Tompson are going, Walters.

WALTERS. Yes, m'm.

[*Goes out.*

MRS. HUGHES. Good night!

JULIAN. Good night!

MRS. HUGHES. Julian, Margaret says you want me to get married!

JULIAN. [*Laughing.*] What?

MARGARET. [*Laughs.*] *Mother!*

MRS. HUGHES. Well, I think I will have a last look round! Good night.

JULIAN AND MARGARET. Good night.

[MARGARET *goes out with her.*

TOMPSON. [*To* JULIAN.] Good night. Don't put that article entirely out of your mind. I don't want to be an alarmist, and I agree with you there's nothing in it. But the best way to avert trouble of any kind is to be ready to meet it.

JULIAN. Oh, that's all right.

[*They shake hands.*

TOMPSON. [*To* MARGARET, *whom he meets coming in the door.*] Good night.

MARGARET. Good night, and thank you for coming over.

TOMPSON. Not at all.

[*All repeat* "Good night." MARGARET *closes the door, turns, and faces* JULIAN. *They look at each other a second, half amused, but with love in their eyes. The smile dies out;* MARGARET *puts her hands on* JULIAN'S *shoulders, and looks up lovingly into his eyes.*

MARGARET. [*Softly.*] *Dear* Julian!

JULIAN. [*Puts his arms about her, and draws her to him. He kisses her, and speaks softly.*] My darling wife!

MARGARET. [*With her head on his shoulder.*] Mother hated to leave us alone!

[*Both laugh.*

JULIAN. Margaret, what a lucky man I am!

[*Leading her to the sofa.*

MARGARET. Nonsense! The luck is all on my side. Shall we have some music? Do you feel able?

JULIAN. Yes, indeed! But later! First, I've something I want to tell you.

[*He makes a movement for them to sit down; she hangs back.*

MARGARET. That article about Philip Long? Don't trouble!

JULIAN. It isn't trouble, dear. At least, I feel it's better to tell you what there is to tell.

MARGARET. Very well, Julian, if you wish. But of course I don't believe a word in the article!

JULIAN. Yet in a way some of it is true.

[*They sit down.*

MARGARET. In what way?

JULIAN. Well, once I *did* write a couple of love letters to Miss Forster.

MARGARET. [*Smilingly.*] No, I don't believe you. You're trying to tease me.

JULIAN. No, it's true! But it was three years ago. Before I knew you even, I had broken with her. I won't insult the word "love" by using it in connection with her; but I believed in her. And in something like a fortnight she herself disillusioned me! I was a boy as far as women were concerned. I'd always been a man's man, caring only for man's company. I wasn't a woman-hater; it was only I hadn't come in contact with them, and didn't miss woman then — to be honest.

MARGARET. And now?

JULIAN. Now!! Now!!! [*His arms about her.*] This old story, foolish and empty, hasn't made you doubt me, has it?

MARGARET. No, no!

JULIAN. [*Holds her in his arms.*] All my time, all my desires, as a very young man, had been wrapt up in my profession. Do you forgive me?

MARGARET. Of course! Of course!!

JULIAN. When I met you, I'd already forgotten the woman. My experience hadn't embittered me. I knew she was a bad lot, and I'd forgotten her.

MARGARET. But you'd seen many other women since that, — before you met me!

JULIAN. By George, yes! Millions!! Some made my eyelashes quiver just a little, perhaps! But I was on my guard! And when I met you, I stopped right then! And before long I knew here was the real thing — love that you read about — lasting, faithful! You believe me, Margaret?

MARGARET. Yes. [*Rising, and looking at him, with her hands on his shoulder.*] And, Julian, I don't ask to be your first love; I only want to be your *last.* Come, let's play.

JULIAN. [*Rising.*] You understand, I never saw or thought of Claire Forster again, till I found her trying to ruin my friend!

MARGARET. I understand everything good of you, Julian, and nothing bad. [*He puts his arms about her.*] I understand how I love you, first and last and always. I have perfect faith in you! *You* represent life in this world to me. I love you — and I believe in your love for me. That's all I can say. I mean ten million times more than that. But I know of no words to say it in. And if I did know the words, then they would fall short still ten million times of what my love and your love mean to me!

JULIAN. Thank you! I wish I were worthier of you. I feel so ashamed of the story I've told you.

MARGARET. Don't! I've forgotten it! You forget it, too! Come, we'll play, and that'll drive it out of our minds. [*Going to piano.*] You hear me! It's to be driven out of our minds *for good!* [*He kisses her.*

JULIAN. Bless you, Margaret! [*They go to the piano,* MARGARET *to the Left.* JULIAN *sits.*] What shall we play?

MARGARET. What *you* want!

[*Taking out her violin.*

JULIAN. No, what *you* want!

[*They laugh at each other.*

MARGARET. I want what *you* choose!

JULIAN. That's just the way I feel.

[*They both laugh again.*

MARGARET. Now, we are a foolish pair of lovers!

JULIAN. [*Picking up a piece of music.*] This?

MARGARET. [*Looking at it.*] Yes.

[*As they are getting ready to play.*

JULIAN. How thoughtful of Mrs. Warner to have had her rehearsal, and taken our guests away!

MARGARET. Yes! I'm afraid she didn't do it purposely, but it *was* nice of her, all the same!

JULIAN. Our guests were very nice. *But* —!

MARGARET. Exactly! "But"! How happy we are alone together, Julian, in our own home.

[*He seizes her hand, which holds the bow, and kisses it. Then they begin to play. Once or twice they look at each other and smile as they play. After a few seconds, the door opens*

quickly, and a POLICE INSPECTOR *enters with* WALTERS. *A* POLICEMAN *is in the hall outside.*

WALTERS. Mr. Rolfe, this man insists —

[*They stop playing, and* JULIAN *rises.*

INSPECTOR. [*Coming down to them.*] Is this Mr. Julian Rolfe?

JULIAN. It is. Why do you come into my house like this? What do you want?

INSPECTOR. [*Very quietly.*] I have an order for your arrest.

MARGARET. What!

INSPECTOR. I'm very sorry to break in on you like this, m'm.

JULIAN. Come, this is some practical joke!

INSPECTOR. Practical joke! Good God, what do you take me for? [*He goes to the door, opens it, and calls:*] Sweeney!

SWEENEY. [*Appears at the door.*] Yes, sir.

[MARGARET *puts down her violin.*

INSPECTOR. Captain Warren there?

WARREN. [*Answering from outside.*] Yes, sir!

INSPECTOR. All right.

[*Closes the door.*

MARGARET. Julian!

INSPECTOR. Excuse me, but this is no joke!

JULIAN. You've really come here to arrest me?

INSPECTOR. Yes, sir, and I hope you'll make my duty as easy as possible for us both, by coming with me quietly.

MARGARET. Julian!

JULIAN. Wait in the hall, Walters.

WALTERS. Yes, sir. [*Goes out.*

JULIAN. But what are you arresting me for?

INSPECTOR. For the murder of Philip Long.

MARGARET. No! No! It's impossible. Why, you're crazy! My husband was Philip Long's best friend! My husband is a man whose character is above reproach. You can't bring a charge like that against my husband! Why, half New York will rise to resist you — fight you!

JULIAN. One minute, Margaret, dear, — please! [*To* INSPECTOR.] Where's your warrant?

INSPECTOR. [*Hands* JULIAN *the warrant. To* MARGARET.] It's the State who's bringing the charge, — not I, m'm.

MARGARET. [*Growing excited.*] But do you mean to tell me that in a free country like ours, an innocent man can be taken by force at night from his own house, from his wife's arms, and without any redress?

JULIAN. [*Calmingly.*] Margaret, dear! [*To the* INSPECTOR.] Where are you going to take me?

INSPECTOR. To the nearest station house, to-night, where the charge will be formally entered.

MARGARET. [*Aghast.*] The charge!

[JULIAN *makes a tender, calming gesture toward her.*

INSPECTOR. To-morrow morning you will appear before —

MARGARET. But my husband's ill! He's an ill man!

JULIAN. What about bail?

MARGARET. [*Quickly.*] Yes, I'll get bail somewhere! Who shall I go to, Julian? There are fifty rich men who'd come to your assistance, I know!

INSPECTOR. I can't say anything about bail. It's for the Judge to decide; but I'm afraid you mustn't count on bail in a case of this sort.

JULIAN. In a case like this where there can be absolutely *no* proof?

INSPECTOR. Excuse me,—it's not my business to discuss the case with you, but to take you to the station house. Only, I advise you to take along anything you may want in the way of clothes or comforts you're allowed, because, take my word for it, the proofs are enough to rob you of your chance of bail.

MARGARET. [*Much more excited.*] It's a lie! Do you hear me, it's a lie! Julian!

JULIAN. Keep calm, dear!

INSPECTOR. I take it you don't read the evening papers!

JULIAN. You're arresting me on that article about my letters?

MARGARET. He wrote them years ago! He —

JULIAN. [*To* MARGARET, *kindly.*] Ssh!

INSPECTOR. The woman has made a very damaging statement which will be read to you. Are you ready to go with me?

JULIAN. Oh! She's made a statement, has she?

MARGARET. Yes, but you can't take the word of a creature like that, who is perhaps lying to save herself!

INSPECTOR. Are you ready to come?

MARGARET. [*More excited, verging on hysterics.*] No! No! You can't take him away like this! You sha'n't!

JULIAN. Margaret!

MARGARET. He's been ill, I tell you! You can't take him away, to sleep where or how! You've no right to risk his life!

JULIAN. Margaret, I must go! But it'll be all right. I'll be back soon — maybe to-morrow. [*Going to her.*] Good night, dear.

MARGARET. [*Hysterical.*] No! No! I can't bear it, Julian! I realize better than you the risk you're running. He's been ill for two months; he hasn't been out of the house yet! Let him stay home to-night. I give you my word he'll be here to-morrow morning. Give him your word, too, Julian!

JULIAN. That's impossible. The law's the law! I'm perfectly able to go with this man. Calm yourself, if you love me! And say good night. [*She tries to calm her hysteria; he embraces and kisses her; she sobs hysterically. He turns to the* INSPECTOR.] I'm ready!

MARGARET. Oh, no! Not yet! Not yet! Perhaps we can think of some way!

INSPECTOR. There's no way, Madam, except the way to the station house. If your husband is innocent, he'll prove it. But meanwhile —

MARGARET. [*Interrupting, and clinging to* JULIAN.] No, Julian, don't go! Refuse to go! They really can't make you. You didn't do this dreadful thing, and you know it, and can prove it, without their taking you away! Don't go! Don't go!

JULIAN. My love! My love! Be strong!

INSPECTOR. Come now, Madam. He's got to go; he knows, and he's willing. You're only making things worse.

MARGARET. No, I'm not! I tell you he isn't fit to go out to-night, and to go to such a horror!

JULIAN. [*In agony at her suffering.*] Margaret!

MARGARET. A chill, the strain, anything might bring back his illness! It'd kill him! He sha'n't go! I won't let him! Do you hear me?

I'll hang on to you both, to hold you back; and God'll give me strength!

INSPECTOR. Come along!

JULIAN. [*Aside to the* INSPECTOR.] No! Call in your men and take me away as if by force! Once I'm gone, it'll be easier for her.

MARGARET. Do you hear me? You sha'n't take him out of this room, — at any rate without me!

JULIAN. [*To the* INSPECTOR.] Quick!

[*The* INSPECTOR *goes toward the door.*

MARGARET. [*In an ecstacy, thinking he's going to leave them.*] You'll leave him!! Oh, thank you! Thank you! He'll be here to-morrow, I promise you! We'll both be here! You won't be sorry!

INSPECTOR. I'm not going to leave him! I want my men. [*Opens the door and calls:*] Sweeney!

MARGARET. Julian!

[*Running to him, and embracing him; he tries to calm her.*

SWEENEY. [*As he comes in.*] Yes, sir.

INSPECTOR. Take charge of this man!

SWEENEY. Yes, sir.

[*Going to* JULIAN.

MARGARET. [*Hysterical,—almost beside herself.*] No! No!

JULIAN. I must go with him, dear, and you're making it so hard for me!

[*Going.*

MARGARET. Then take me, too! Let me go with him. Arrest me, too!

[*Going after them, and catching hold of* JULIAN.

INSPECTOR. No, Madam!

MARGARET. Yes! Yes! That's all I ask, now. Take me with him!

INSPECTOR. It can't be!

JULIAN. Stay here, dear! Stay here!

MARGARET. [*Beside herself.*] No! No! Take me, too. I will go, too!

INSPECTOR. [*Pulling her away from* JULIAN.] *No!*

JULIAN. [*To the* INSPECTOR.] Be careful!

[JULIAN, *the* POLICEMAN *and* INSPECTOR *move toward door.*

MARGARET. [*Quite beside herself, half screams, half cries.*] No, I can't bear it. You sha'n't separate us! Julian! [*Running to them, she clings to* JULIAN *at the door. He tries tenderly to free himself from her, but can't. The* POLICEMAN *and* INSPECTOR *pull him through the door, dragging her along, as she clings to* JULIAN.] They sha'n't separate us! I will go with you, Julian, I will go with you!

[JULIAN *tries to calm her with* "Margaret, my dear little woman." *The double doors are open, and they are heard in the hall outside.*

INSPECTOR. [*Taking* JULIAN'S *arm.*] You must get rid of her! [*The* POLICEMAN *closes the doors.* MARGARET *is heard crying that she won't leave him, and the* INSPECTOR, *loud, angry, losing at last his control, says:*] By God, you must let go of him!

MARGARET. [*Off stage.*] No! No! You'll see!

INSPECTOR. [*Off stage.*] Sweeney, throw the woman off!

JULIAN. [*Off stage.*] *No!*

MARGARET. [*Screams.*] *No!*

[*There is a loud bang on the door, as* MARGARET'S *body strikes it. The door bursting open, she falls in, and tumbles on the floor, crying,* "Julian! Julian!"

JULIAN. [*Off stage.*] Damn you for a beast!

INSPECTOR. [*Off stage.*] Here, come along. I've stood all I can, now. The door, Warren!

MARGARET. [*On the floor, helpless in her hysteria, raises herself on her elbow, calling out:*] Julian! Julian!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE: *Visitors' Room at the Tombs*

[MARGARET, MRS. HUGHES, *and* TOMPSON *shown in by the attendant.*

MRS. HUGHES. [*To* MARGARET.] Oh, dear, is this where you have to see him every time?

MARGARET. Yes, mother.

MRS. HUGHES. What awful taste! They might have furnished it better. Look how well they do hotels now!

TOMPSON. You mustn't forget that the guests of smart hotels pay well. Here, the guests pay nothing, except with their consciences.

MARGARET. Julian is paying a heavy price, but not with his conscience.

TOMPSON. That's true! But to punish the guilty, the innocent must sometimes suffer. It's the history of the world!

MRS. HUGHES. Do you know, the place gets quite on my nerves! I really feel faint!

MARGARET. [*Going to her mother.*] Oh, mother, no!

MRS. HUGHES. Yes, really. Do you think Julian will be here soon?

TOMPSON. [*Looking at his watch.*] Well, we're a little ahead of our time, but I think he'll be here presently.

MRS. HUGHES. Do you think he'd feel very badly if I didn't wait? [*Rising.*] I'll leave my card here, do you see, and turn down the end to show I really came myself; but, of course, you'll be here and could tell him!

MARGARET. [*Rising and giving the card back to*

MRS. HUGHES.] Don't leave your card, mother, —leave your love. I'll give it to Julian,—and you go. It's just as well, because Mr. Tompson and I will have much to say about the case to him.

MRS. HUGHES. I know, and I'd like to stay here and advise, but I really do feel so awfully upset by the whole thing! To think that a son-in-law of Mrs. Winifred Hughes should be in this place!

MARGARET. Yes, yes, mother! I think it's better you should go. Your nerves won't stand it.

[*She motions to* TOMPSON, *who opens the door.*

MRS. HUGHES. I really oughtn't to have come. I knew I oughtn't, but you persuaded me!

MARGARET. No, mother, I begged you not to come, but you insisted!

MRS. HUGHES. Yes, I know, — I thought you meant you wanted me to. I can't go out alone!

MARGARET. There's a man there who'll show you the way.

[*The* ATTENDANT *appears.*

ATTENDANT. This way, Madam.

MRS. HUGHES. Thank you. [*To* MARGARET.] Give him my love!

MARGARET. Yes.

[MRS. HUGHES *goes out.* TOMPSON *and* MARGARET *come back into the room.*

TOMPSON. Shall I leave you alone with Rolfe, and come back?

MARGARET. When he comes, if you would! — for a few minutes.

TOMPSON. Of course, of course!

MARGARET. But not for long. [*She smiles sadly.*] You keep me calm!

TOMPSON. Don't you worry about yourself. You're wonderful, Mrs. Rolfe, in your self-possession and nerve!

MARGARET. You're very good, but I lost control of myself entirely, that awful night, three weeks ago.

TOMPSON. Oh, but that was natural — natural.

MARGARET. I was tired out by all my anxiety during his illness, I suppose, — because I'm not naturally an overstrung woman.

TOMPSON. You don't have to tell me that, now, after the way you've behaved these three weeks!

MARGARET. Still, I feel if only you'd been there when it happened, if they'd only come a little earlier in the evening, when you *were* there, I wouldn't have gone to pieces so! I blame myself, because it made it all the more terrible for him.

TOMPSON. You still feel absolutely convinced he was totally unprepared?

MARGARET. [*Surprised.*] Why, yes, — of course! What a funny question for you to ask me!

TOMPSON. Oh, that's my business, you know, —asking every kind of question.

MARGARET. Yes, — but —?

[*With a look of suspicion.*

TOMPSON. I think it so unfortunate that Rolfe never told you of his little affair with Miss Forster.

MARGARET. It wasn't an affair!

TOMPSON. Well, whatever you want to call it!

MARGARET. But he did.

TOMPSON. Yes, when the cat was out of the bag; when the letters were published.

MARGARET. But —

TOMPSON. Don't you see how that will tell against him?

MARGARET. No!

TOMPSON. He only tells you when forced to, and then claims the letters were three years old.

MARGARET. He doesn't *claim;* he states a fact. They were!

TOMPSON. But the dates on them are only a few days before the murder!

MARGARET. Forged, of course, — you know that!

TOMPSON. Yes, and anyway, I suppose we must leave that to the writing experts. We'll at least see that we furnish as many as they do!

MARGARET. But — but you are arguing with

me as if your confidence had — as if you thought —

TOMPSON. I'm thinking nothing. I'm only trying to look at everything from every side.

[*She glances at him doubtfully a second, then speaks emphatically.*

MARGARET. There is only one side to look at, — Julian's absolute and entire innocence, which no one who even knows him slightly can doubt for a moment!

TOMPSON. That's all right as a point of view for his wife, but not for his lawyer, who wants to save him.

MARGARET. [*Going to the window.*] There couldn't be such a miscarriage of justice.

TOMPSON. I could cite you *several* instances, within your memory in the last fifteen years in

New York, where men have expiated the crime of murder, with their friends and family and many of the public absolutely convinced of their entire innocence.

MARGARET. [*Turning on him.*] Oh, but it's cruel of you to talk like this to me! *Why* do you!

TOMPSON. Because I *must* rouse you to a realization of the fact that the evidence in this case, rightly or wrongly, is terribly against your husband!

MARGARET. Wrongly! Wrongly!!

TOMPSON. [*Quietly.*] Of course! But we must work every second, and in every direction, all the same, to help him. [MARGARET *turns away, half crying, to control herself.*] I'm sorry to seem to be so hard, and to have to be cruel. You must take my word for that!

MARGARET. [*Her eyes filling with tears.*] But I can't help feeling a change in you — in your mind and heart — about him. I don't know what it is, I can't put my hand on any special thing, but I *feel* it — I don't know — it's an instinct which women have. You *have* wavered in your confidence!

TOMPSON. [*Going to her.*] *You* haven't?

MARGARET. No!!

TOMPSON. Well, I don't say I have. Perhaps I feel I've not been told everything; that Julian, for some reason or other, hasn't been perfectly frank!

MARGARET. What reason? There couldn't be any!

TOMPSON. For instance, just as he kept back his acquaintance with her.

MARGARET. But he's made a clean breast of

that, and of everything, you can be sure, that has to do with Miss Forster.

TOMPSON. And with Philip Long?

MARGARET. And with Philip Long. I am sure of it!

TOMPSON. [*Turning on her very quickly and sharply.*] Do you know anything, — no matter what — no matter how trivial, — that I don't know?

MARGARET. [*Stands still a moment, searching in her mind, in her memory.* TOMPSON *watches her closely. After a minute, she speaks slowly:*] No — no! I'm sure I don't! [*He watches her in silence, to read in her face if she is speaking the truth. After a pause:*] But you are taking the offensive attitude with us — with me! Why? Why do you —?

TOMPSON. If I am to save him, I must know everything — everything!

MARGARET. [*Going to him, frightened and yet confident.*] But you do! You do!

TOMPSON. There is a most damaging new piece of evidence come up in the case. The other side tried to keep it secret, — to spring upon us in the trial, — but, fortunately, a newspaper got hold of it, and we have our chance to refute it — [*he adds, almost to himself*] if we can.

MARGARET. [*Eager, anxious, distressed.*] What is it?

TOMPSON. Wait till he comes, and I'll tell you both together.

MARGARET. And he'll explain it away to you in a moment, if it's honest evidence. [JULIAN *is shown in. He is very pale, but otherwise looks well.*] Julian!

[*She hurries to him; they embrace.*

JULIAN. How are you, Tompson?

[*They shake hands.*

MARGARET. How do you feel, Julian? Are you well?

JULIAN. My dear girl, I never felt better in my life! You mustn't worry about my health. I'd like to get out into the air, but I assure you that the doctor's orders have been so carefully carried out as to *enforced quiet and rest* — [*with a smile*] that I'm entirely well again! Any news?

[*They all sit down.*

MARGARET. [*Quickly.*] Yes, dear Julian! And the same good news always! Everyone I know, believing in you absolutely, — fighting for you! Everyone too kind for words to me! I've not heard a soul who doubts that the trial will be a triumph for you. You've seen the letter in this morning's —

JULIAN. Yes, it was fine, wasn't it? And all this good-will, of course, means a lot to me, es-

pecially for your sake! [*They sit side by side, holding each other's hands.*] But I mean, have you any practical news? How is the case progressing, Tompson?

TOMPSON. I want to look over a paper or two, outside. I'll come back in a few minutes, and go over everything with you.

JULIAN. [*To stop him.*] But —?

MARGARET. [*To* JULIAN *aside, interrupting him.*] No! He wants to leave us alone. Let him. [*Smiling.*

[TOMPSON *goes out.*

JULIAN. [*Embracing* MARGARET *again.*] My poor, darling Margaret, what you have to bear! And for me — that's so hard!

MARGARET. [*Resting in his arms, with her head on his shoulder.*] Shh! Listen, dearest, I've something very important to tell you while he's

out of the room — something I've only just now discovered.

[*Looking at him.*

JULIAN. Yes, dear?

MARGARET. Mr. Tompson is lukewarm.

JULIAN. How do you mean?

MARGARET. [*Rising.*] I don't know. I don't feel satisfied. I wonder if we ought to bring in another firm?

JULIAN. You don't mean he doubts for a moment the impossibility of my being guilty of the crime of Philip's death?

MARGARET. [*Quickly.*] No, no! Of course not, — I don't say that, — only — I don't know! To-day, he asks me all sorts of questions, and such odd questions, — as to whether you'd told me everything, and whether you'd told *him* everything you'd told me — and —

JULIAN. And what did you say?

MARGARET. I don't remember. I only know, of course, I told him you had no secrets about this, from me or him!

JULIAN. Not one!

[*Taking her two hands.*

MARGARET. No, don't say it! I want you to feel I know it, without your saying it. Oh, Julian, how I suffer for you!

JULIAN. That's one of the strangely cruel things about it all. I feel as if, were it only myself, I could bear it so much easier. But it's the thought of *you!* And with you, it's the thought of *me!*

MARGARET. If I could only be here in the prison with you — share it all with you!

JULIAN. But think what I would feel at your being here in these surroundings — *for me!*

MARGARET. [*Sighing.*] Yes, I know, I know, — and I've my work to do for you, outside. Well, you think it's all right, then, for us to keep on with Tompson?

JULIAN. Oh, yes; as far as I can judge, he seems to be doing everything. I'm sure of it!

MARGARET. And after all, whoever we have, whatever he does, they can't help but free you, my good Julian!

JULIAN. I hope so. I believe so, Margaret! Of course, if I allowed myself to dwell on my being here — in all this strain, under this awful cloud, almost disgraced by the mere fact of the accusation —

MARGARET. [*Interrupting, with her arm about him.*] Oh, no, Julian, you mustn't say that!

JULIAN. But it's true! I am a respectable

and respected citizen of this city, who's never done a dishonorable action in my life!

MARGARET. [*With perfect confidence.*] Never!

JULIAN. Never even done a tricky thing in business!

MARGARET. I'm sure of it!

JULIAN. [*Goes on, scarcely noticing* MARGARET'S *interruptions. He rises.*] With a perfectly clean record, publicly and privately, I can yet be hauled up — accused of a crime, clapped into jail, forced to stand trial for my life! Why, it's inconceivable! It's like the Middle Ages!

MARGARET. [*Going on.*] It's an outrage! It's a dastardly outrage!

JULIAN. No, — for if you reason it out in cold blood, how else can the criminal laws of the state be properly carried out?

MARGARET. [*Striking the table.*] Any other

way! Any other way that will prevent an innocent man suffering what you have!

JULIAN. [*Looks at her, with a smile.*] And an innocent woman, dearest. [*Putting his arm around her.*] No, I guess our laws are better made than we could make them.

[TOMPSON *knocks at the door.*

MARGARET. Come in.

[TOMPSON *enters.*

TOMPSON. [*To* MARGARET.] Now, I'm going to ask a favor of you, — turn about is fair play. I want you to give me fifteen minutes alone with your husband.

MARGARET. No! Why? You told me you had some serious evidence against us to tell Julian. I wish to hear it, too!

JULIAN. [*Quickly.*] What is that?

TOMPSON. There are several matters which

I wish to discuss with your husband, which I feel we could better speak of without your presence.

MARGARET. Why?

JULIAN. If Mr. Tompson really wishes, Margaret —?

MARGARET. No! I don't want anything good or bad kept from me. I don't want to be shut out from you in any of this ordeal of yours. I want to share it all, — *all* with you. You have no secrets from me, I know, Julian!

JULIAN. None!

MARGARET. And you don't want to have any, do you?

JULIAN. No, but if Mr. Tompson —

MARGARET. No! I don't wish to offend Mr. Tompson, — [*she turns to him*] as I hope you know, but I am not willing for you to question my husband, and without me here. You haven't

got the faith I have; you showed that to me just now. You're weakening. I daren't leave you for long, ever again, Mr. Tompson, until this case is finished. Your faith in my husband is like a flame dying down. [TOMPSON *makes a gesture of dissent.*] It is! And I'm going to watch that flame, day and night, and feed it with my own faith, and keep it alive! And I won't leave him alone with you unless Julian insists on my going.

TOMPSON. I only wanted you to go so as to spare you some extra pain which it doesn't seem necessary at present to inflict on you.

JULIAN. Then, why not go, Margaret?

MARGARET. No, don't ask! Please don't ask me to shirk any pain that I can share with you. Besides, pain or not, I want to *know everything* — just what we have to fight!

JULIAN. [*Who is standing beside her, with his arms around her, gives her a hug, and says impulsively to* TOMPSON, *with a smile:*] What a bully little woman she is!

TOMPSON. Very well! They've got a letter of Philip Long's, written to you the very day of his death, which they claim is enough to prove their case against you!

JULIAN. But I never received any such letter.

TOMPSON. No, — they claim it was never sent. It was found among his effects lately.

MARGARET. Huh! A forgery, like the dates on Julian's letters to her!

TOMPSON. I have reason to believe the letter is authentic; though, of course, if it's offered as evidence, we will put our experts to work on it. I have a copy of the letter here.

MARGARET. [*Going quickly to him.*] Here!

JULIAN. Why didn't you say so!

MARGARET. What does it say?

[*With excitement, both speaking in the same haste.*

TOMPSON. [*Reading.*] "Julian, I have found out quite by accident — not from her — that you were here to see Claire to-day."

JULIAN. I went that morning to see her privately, to ask her to break off with Philip of her own accord — to frighten her into doing it, if I could, without the scene with all three — which I knew would only be brutal and degrading for Philip, — in fact, for all of us!

TOMPSON. I see. Your visit at night was the second visit that day?

JULIAN. Yes, that time we went together.

MARGARET. You know, of course, Philip and he together.

TOMPSON. Well, but what I can't possibly understand is, why I have never heard of this morning visit before!

[MARGARET *looks at* JULIAN, *confident of his sure answer.*

JULIAN. I didn't think to tell you.

TOMPSON. Didn't think! Didn't think!!

MARGARET. It wasn't successful! He has told of the second, the important visit!

JULIAN. Miss Forster was out when I called. I didn't see her, — that is why I didn't mention the visit. It didn't count then.

TOMPSON. I'm afraid you'll find it will count now, and strong against you!

MARGARET. Oh!

JULIAN. When I met Philip at his club, in the

evening, he was in a half-drunken rage with me, as I've stated in my evidence. We had all this out, then. He accused me of every kind of treachery, but I knew he didn't know what he was saying, and I easily forgave him — especially as I was on my way then with him to prove his jealousy wholly wrong.

TOMPSON. The letter goes on — [*Reads.*] "When I told Claire of your visit, she pretended not to know anything about it, — not to have seen you, — but I soon saw she was trying to protect you, knowing what friends we were — so I made her own up to the truth. I told her you were moving Heaven and Hell to keep me from marrying her, and then she out with it: that you had been to see her that morning — and many mornings; that she had love letters from you she could show me, to prove what she

said; and that the only reason you were against her and my marriage was because you were in love with her yourself. You're a damn fine friend! And by G —" The rest isn't fit to read.

[*He lays the letter down on the table.*

MARGARET. Nor was what you have read fit to read, either!

JULIAN. Poor, rotten chap! She'd got her devilish work in with him already! What a dear, good sort he used to be, — and gone to the dogs through that woman! Of course he was drunk when he wrote that letter — drunk when she told him all that rigmarole about me! It seems to me I do remember his saying something about having written a letter — when we had our row in my rooms.

TOMPSON. You had a row with him, then? That night?

JULIAN. No! Not a row exactly! He came in with this same story, and I gave it the lie. I could always influence his better nature. He practically believed me when we started out for his rooms. That's when he said something about a letter he was glad he hadn't sent.

MARGARET. He believed in you, even when he wrote that letter, and that's why he never sent it.

TOMPSON. That's a good theory. People write in a rage, and don't send the letter on second thoughts, knowing it may not be the best thing after all. I hope we can persuade the jury of that. But then, there's the woman.

JULIAN. How?

TOMPSON. Well, if she swears that what's in the letter is true, you've got her word, supported

by the letter, against only your unsupported explanation.

JULIAN. Hum! They'll produce Claire Forster, of course, for their principal witness?

TOMPSON. Oh, naturally!

JULIAN. Well, but then you'll cross-examine her?

TOMPSON. Certainly.

JULIAN. Surely you'll be able to trip her up in her tissue of lies.

TOMPSON. Not surely. She'll be prepared for a tough time with us; she'll be primed! She'll be ready for anything!

JULIAN. And she's very clever!

TOMPSON. [*Serious, but kind.*] Then there's a lot of terribly strong circumstantial proof against you. [MARGARET *rises.*

JULIAN. I see it, — I begin to see it!

TOMPSON. If you'd only gone straight home when you left Long and her together.

JULIAN. I couldn't! My brain was on fire! I had to walk it off in the cool of the night. I walked for two hours in the Park.

TOMPSON. Exactly, and in that second hour he killed himself, and you can't prove an alibi. It's as if the Devil himself had planned it! If you'd only met a policeman in the Park.

JULIAN. Perhaps I did! I didn't notice. If I'd only been seen leaving her house at half past twelve.

TOMPSON. But you weren't. We can't get a single witness of that sort. Why did you keep it hidden you'd ever known this woman?

JULIAN. Was it a thing to boast of?

TOMPSON. Those love letters dated the week of the murder!

JULIAN. The writing experts'll prove the dates false.

TOMPSON. You don't know those experts. There'll be as many to prove them true.

MARGARET. You think that, — you don't know!

TOMPSON. Well, leave everything else, and just consider what's come up to-day! — this damning letter of Long's to tally with the forged date of your love letters to her!

[MARGARET *goes to the table, and takes up the letter.*

MARGARET. He can explain it!

JULIAN. Juries don't want explanations, dear; they want proofs!

[*He takes the letter from* MARGARET, *and looks at it.*

TOMPSON. This morning visit to her, which I only found out to-day — suppose that had been

sprung on us at the trial!! It might have, there and then.

MARGARET. [*In distress.*] You see! You see! I tell you, your faith is weakening!

[*Almost in tears.* JULIAN *turns and puts his hand on her shoulder.*

TOMPSON. And then this quarrel with him before you went to his house. First you say a quarrel, and then no quarrel. You contradict yourself, — [MARGARET *looks up*] you deny, you explain. But you prove nothing. You prove *nothing!* On the contrary!! I won't *dare* put you in the witness-box.

MARGARET. Put *me! I'll* prove how deep and true his love for me was at that very time. No man is such a blackguard as they want to make out Julian, that he could love another woman at the very moment he was marrying

me. I tell you there was never a happier bride in the world than he made me! That must prove *something!*

TOMPSON. [*Going toward them, in a lowered voice.*] Here, in these four walls, with no one to hear but her who loves you above everything, and I, who want to-day — more than anything else in the world, — to save you, but in order to do that, as your lawyer, must be told the truth, all the truth! — come, tell me, so help you God, the truth now, and I will believe you! You did not kill Philip Long?

[JULIAN *looks up at him, horrified.*

MARGARET. Julian, I told you! Oh, that *you* should have to suffer that! Don't answer him, — he doesn't deserve it!

JULIAN. [*Very quietly, after looking into* TOMPSON'S *face.*] No, I didn't kill my friend!

TOMPSON. You had a quarrel, perhaps, and in the heat of the quarrel —

JULIAN. No!

TOMPSON. Say he wasn't your friend, — say he was your enemy, — he insulted you — perhaps your wife?

JULIAN. No! No!

MARGARET. Julian! Julian! [*She throws her arms around him, and holds him fast.*] You sha'n't ask him any more such brutal questions.

TOMPSON. [*Still quietly, but firmly.*] He may have made the first attack on you! Furious at the insults you were piling on the woman he loved, — you struck in self-defense, perhaps —

MARGARET. [*Interrupting him.*] No! No!! No!!!

JULIAN. [*Quietly, firmly.*] I did not raise my hand against my friend; I did not hurt him —

let alone kill him, — and I am and always have been telling you the truth.

TOMPSON. [*After a few seconds' pause, looking* JULIAN *straight in the eyes.*] Thank God! I wanted to believe it, and *I do!* [*To* MARGARET.] Forgive me! Remember, you're his wife, — and let me tell you, your faith has helped to keep mine alive — and it will save him, if anything can.

MARGARET. My faith in him is more than human, — it comes from my very soul, and you know in our souls lives whatever there is of the divine in us.

[*The* ATTENDANT *enters.*

ATTENDANT. Excuse me, Mr. Rolfe's time is up.

MARGARET. [*Turning to* JULIAN.] Already?

TOMPSON. But we must tell you the good news! The trial is set for the March calendar.

JULIAN. Not till then?

TOMPSON. Ah, but we will need that time! They're making out a strong case and, although it is a false one, we will have plenty to do, between now and then, getting material and proof and witnesses to combat their evidence!

JULIAN. Yes, I suppose so, I suppose so! [*He turns to* MARGARET, *handing the letter to* TOMPSON.] It's strange, I don't understand why, but I can't feel the horror, — I can't realize the position.

MARGARET. That's because you're incapable of even imagining yourself in the position of a man who had done the dreadful thing they accuse you of.

TOMPSON. Yes, if you were guilty, you'd realize it easy enough. And now I want you to go to work, and search your memory through and

through for any infinitesimal detail that may have to do with your case. Or anything which has to do with either Long or the Forster woman, or both, — even if in your own mind it has nothing to do with the case. And tell me the result to-morrow. I don't want any more surprises. For the future, let's be prepared beforehand for anything the other side may spring on us. [*Taking his hand.*] Good-by!

JULIAN. [*Shaking hands cheerfully.*] Good-by! [*As* TOMPSON *goes out, he turns his back discreetly.*

MARGARET. Till to-morrow, Julian.

JULIAN. [*Kissing her.*] Till to-morrow.

MARGARET. You're not discouraged?

JULIAN. Not a bit, — and don't you lose heart, either.

MARGARET. Ah, never!

JULIAN. And forgive me!

MARGARET. Hush! Are you comfortable in your room?

JULIAN. [*Half humorously.*] Yes. [*Then he adds quickly for her sake:*] *Yes*, quite!

MARGARET. There's nothing I can do to make you more comfortable?

JULIAN. No, dear, no! Till to-morrow.

[*Goes out with the* ATTENDANT.

[MARGARET *stands a second, lost in thought.* TOMPSON *is waiting for her.*

TOMPSON. Shall we go?

MARGARET. Wait a minute. Mr. Tompson, at last I've thought of something I can do, if only you say so, too!

TOMPSON. What is it?

MARGARET. There is one person who knows the truth about it all.

TOMPSON. Claire Forster?

MARGARET. Yes. She's "the woman in the case." There's always a woman!

TOMPSON. Generally.

MARGARET. Always!

TOMPSON. *Generally!*

MARGARET. ALWAYS!!

TOMPSON. But in this instance there is a double difficulty, — the woman in the case isn't hidden, — she stands out before everybody, as chief witness, chief accuser.

MARGARET. Ah, but you're wrong! It's the real woman hidden inside her bold, lying front that is the true woman in this case. The woman who knows and who would speak the truth if we could only get at her!

TOMPSON. I see your point, and it's good.

MARGARET. The thing is to get at the woman.

[*Walking up and down.*

TOMPSON. Hum! — Difficult!

MARGARET. Oh, yes, — only a woman could!

TOMPSON. Could even another woman?

MARGARET. I think so. And I'm going to try!

TOMPSON. You!

MARGARET. [*Standing still.*] Yes! Who better? Do you suppose she's ever seen me?

TOMPSON. No, she'd never heard of you till just before your marriage. You were then in the country, where she could not possibly have been. And ever since you came back from your wedding journey, you've been practically shut up in Rolfe's sick-room. No! It's every chance she hasn't seen you.

MARGARET. You know where she lives?

TOMPSON. Oh, yes, — our detectives have been watching her for the last three weeks.

MARGARET. They must tell me everything they know, and then you must call them off.

TOMPSON. What is your plan?

MARGARET. It's perfectly straightforward, and if it works at all, it will be very simple. I suppose she lives in a flat?

TOMPSON. Yes, a very ordinary one — considering everything. It seems she's a miser.

MARGARET. Good! A weakness to work on. Every little helps! I am going to live in the same house,—as close to her apartment as I can get.

TOMPSON. You? You can't live there!!

MARGARET. Why not?

TOMPSON. It's impossible! The place — the neighborhood! Everything around you will revolt you.

MARGARET. Everything around will mean the

same to me — Julian's release! Julian's vindication! I mean to meet this woman, somehow, — and her friends; to copy their manners, to be one of them in spirit, in conversation, in eating, drinking, smoking, — what you like!

TOMPSON. [*Amazed.*] *You!!*

MARGARET. Yes! Yes! Will you men never understand what a woman can undergo for a man she loves! You men endure physical torture for our sakes — that our bodies refuse to support, — but we make it up in what we can endure mentally and spiritually for you!

TOMPSON. [*Takes her hand and presses it.*] You are splendid!

[*Half shamefacedly, he kisses her hand.*

MARGARET. No, no! Whatever I am, it is Julian's love and example have made me.

[*The* ATTENDANT *enters.*

ATTENDANT. Mr. Tompson?

[*Both turn.*

TOMPSON. Yes?

ATTENDANT. There's a lady here got permission to see Mr. Rolfe. I told her he had gone back, but that you were here, and she'd like to come in, all the same.

TOMPSON. Ask her name.

[*The* ATTENDANT *goes out.*

MARGARET. [*After a pause.*] Can it be mother come back?

TOMPSON. You can step behind the door, and I'll keep it open in case it's no one you want to see.

ATTENDANT. [*Coming back.*] Miss Claire Forster.

[TOMPSON *and* MARGARET *look at each other in astonishment.*

TOMPSON. Show her in.

MARGARET. No! Why?

TOMPSON. You will see.

[MARGARET *goes quickly behind the door.* TOMPSON *stands with his hand on the knob, holding it far back so that* MARGARET *is completely hidden behind it. The* ATTENDANT *comes in with* CLAIRE. *She is a young woman, pretty and slender, of a rather refined appearance — just the opposite of her real nature. The* ATTENDANT *waits in the doorway.*

TOMPSON. Miss Claire Forster?

CLAIRE. [*Abruptly.*] Yes! Who are you?

TOMPSON. I am the attorney for Mr. Rolfe. My name is Tompson, of Tompson & Slade.

CLAIRE. All right. I want to see Mr. Rolfe. I suppose I'll see quite enough of you at the trial.

[*Laughing.*

TOMPSON. [*With exaggerated politeness.*] Let us hope you won't see too much of me!

CLAIRE. Impossible! I only wish you were *my* lawyer!

TOMPSON. [*Dryly.*] Thanks.

CLAIRE. However, the question now is, am I to see Mr. Rolfe, — isn't it?

TOMPSON. Well, of course Mr. Rolfe would not see you without my permission.

CLAIRE. Really?

TOMPSON. Naturally not, as I am in charge of his case.

CLAIRE. Well, but I am sure a charming gentleman like you won't refuse me a small request like that.

TOMPSON. Turn about is fair play. Will you favor me?

CLAIRE. With pleasure! How?

TOMPSON. Tell me why you wish to see Mr. Rolfe.

CLAIRE. [*Going toward him.*] What cheek!

[*A movement on the part of* TOMPSON *more surely to conceal* MARGARET.

TOMPSON. Oh, I don't know! [*Going to her, and leading her out of the way, to a chair.*] He will tell me, if you don't.

CLAIRE. I'm not sure! Did he tell you I was coming to see him to-day?

TOMPSON. [*Quickly.*] No.

CLAIRE. But he knew it!

TOMPSON. [*Quietly.*] Ah!

CLAIRE. You don't believe me!

TOMPSON. No.

CLAIRE. You can't prove he didn't get a letter from me this morning.

TOMPSON. Perhaps I couldn't *prove* it to a

prejudiced person, but I think it would be very possible! For myself, of course, I don't need any proof!

CLAIRE. I've come for the sake of old days!

TOMPSON. [*Irritated.*] Oh, come!

CLAIRE. [*Emphatically.*] *I've come for the sake of old days*, to tell him how sorry I am to have been the unwilling means of putting him into his present unpleasant position.

TOMPSON. Humph!

CLAIRE. I want to tell him how sorry I am about those letters! The very day they were found, I had made up my mind to destroy them!

TOMPSON. Humph!!

CLAIRE. That's all I wanted to see him for, — a visit of sympathy, — and to tell him things.

TOMPSON. Humph!!!

CLAIRE. As a friend!

TOMPSON. [*Almost beside himself. Rising.*] No, by George! Upon my soul, I never heard of such cruel impudence in all my life!

CLAIRE. [*With baby surprise.*] How do you mean?

TOMPSON. You haven't come here privately, have you?

CLAIRE. No, I tried to keep it quiet, but I couldn't possibly. All the newspapers know of my being here!

TOMPSON. And a nice impression that will make for our case, won't it?

CLAIRE. I hope it won't do any harm. It's against my will I'm being used so against Julian!

TOMPSON. Here, don't you call him Julian — not before me, anyway! Do you know what I've a good mind to do?

CLAIRE. No. What?

TOMPSON. Let you see Rolfe. It would serve you right.

CLAIRE. [*Indignantly.*] How serve me right!

TOMPSON. You know he'd make it a pretty hot visit for you! But I'm not willing to put him in such a painful position as seeing you. Why, what do you take me for? You never expected to see Mr. Rolfe! You've calculated very carefully how what you call a friendly visit from you would tell against him. You give away your whole pose, of the unwilling witness. Veneered on top of your desire to revenge yourself up to the hilt is your love of notoriety, — and here you are satisfying both at the same time! But don't flatter yourself these newspapers who've escorted you here are your friends, — not at all! They're after the "Truth," and when they find you've deceived them into

thinking it was hidden in your petticoats — Well! You'll get all the notoriety then you want! Only, God help you for the kind it will be!

CLAIRE. [*Rising.*] It's impossible for me to talk to you any longer! You're no gentleman! We don't speak the same language!

TOMPSON. No, mine's decent, even when I'm off guard, — and truthful, I hope.

CLAIRE. [*Looks at him and sneers.*] Pooh! Rats!

[*She goes out, followed by the* ATTENDANT. TOMPSON *follows her to the doorway, and looks after her. He closes the door, and* MARGARET *comes forward.*

MARGARET. [*Nervously, holding some paper, a pencil and her cardcase, on which she has been writing.*] Quick, let us go!

TOMPSON. Not yet. Give her time to get away first.

MARGARET. Of course! Here. [*She hands him the piece of paper.*] I've taken notes of everything she said. They may come in useful! The woman never sent Julian a line! You believe what you said, don't you?

TOMPSON. I do!

MARGARET. [*Relieved.*] Ah! That's better! You've a man to send at once to find out if there's an empty flat in her house?

TOMPSON. Yes.

MARGARET. If there is, I'll take it to-morrow. I mean to worm myself into this woman's confidence, somehow.

TOMPSON. She is clever!

MARGARET. So will I be. She will have more than one weak spot.

TOMPSON. She drinks!

MARGARET. If she drinks enough, she'll never keep her secret! I'll try that. I'll drink with her, — I'll powder and paint and dye my hair. I'll live her life with her, whatever it is. And then, what a reward if, at the end, with you hidden somewhere for a witness, I get the true story from her lips!

TOMPSON. [*Going to the door.*] The coast is clear!

MARGARET. [*As they go out.*] Good! I can't wait to begin. [*She turns, and looks back into the room toward where* JULIAN *went out.*] Julian! I've got my hands on the Woman in your case, and I mean to choke out of her the truth and your freedom before I let her go!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE: MARGARET'S *flat in West 52d Street. Two months later. Doors Right and Left. A lace-curtained bow window. Under a big brass chandelier, shaded by a large, flaring red silk shade, is a supper table set for four. The furniture is gilt. Imitation palms stand on the radiator and on a white fur rug by the window. There is an upright piano, with popular music on it. Professional photographs are all about. Parti-colored, sporting pennants are crossed behind the pictures on the figured wall. The time is 10:45 P.M.*

[*Enter* WALTERS, *showing in* TOMPSON, *with hat and coat.*

TOMPSON. [*Who is smoking a cigarette.*] So this is it, is it?

WALTERS. Yes, sir.

TOMPSON. [*Looking at the supper table.*] And everything's ready?

WALTERS. Yes, sir.

TOMPSON. Do you know what theatre they've gone to?

WALTERS. [*Putting finishing touches to the table.*] No, sir.

TOMPSON. You're sure Miss Forster's servants are all out.

WALTERS. Yes, sir. Her cook's left, and the maid's gone for the night. She don't sleep in the flat.

TOMPSON. [*Goes to the bow window and looks out.*] Well, I'm sure I couldn't possibly have been seen coming in. How long has the cook downstairs been gone?

WALTERS. I should say as Miss Forster'd been having her meals with us for about a month now. Of course she jumped at the chance to cut expenses.

TOMPSON. Yes, that was a very clever idea of Mrs. Rolfe's to work it in that way! But it must be very hard for your mistress! Not even to have her breakfast by herself!

WALTERS. Oh, as to that, Miss Forster ain't strong on breakfasts. All the same, it's been a pretty hard job for Mrs. Rolfe, sir.

TOMPSON. And you've done your share splendidly, Walters. You've proved worthy of every bit of confidence we've placed in you.

WALTERS. Thank you, sir. I was a bell-boy in a country hotel when Mrs. Rolfe's family took hold of me, and I couldn't ever repay them for all they've done. Besides, I'm proud to have a hand in helping get Mr. Rolfe free!

TOMPSON. [*Holding out his hand.*] Here, Walters!

WALTERS. No, thank you, sir; not for that, sir.

TOMPSON. What's the matter with you, Walters? There's no money in my hand. I want to shake yours, — that's all!

WALTERS. Oh! Excuse me, sir! Thank you, sir.

[*Gives his hand to* MR. TOMPSON, *who gives it a good, hearty shake.*

TOMPSON. So *this* is the place where she's been playing her heart-rending little comedy!

WALTERS. Yes, sir.

TOMPSON. [*Looking around the room.*] Mrs. Rolfe didn't do it up herself, did she?

WALTERS. Oh, no, sir, — this ain't her taste! This was done by Birdie Lancaster. We've rented it furnished.

TOMPSON. I tell you, there's nothing like these musical comedies to help an honest girl earn a living!

WALTERS. [*Still arranging the table.*] Birdie isn't here this Winter.

TOMPSON. No?

WALTERS. No, sir. She's at Nice and Monte Carlo.

TOMPSON. Oh! Do you know which room we're to hide in?

WALTERS. Yes, sir. This door.

[*Opening door at Right.*

TOMPSON. [*Looking in.*] Hum! All right. Tell the man outside to come in.

WALTERS. Yes, sir.

[*Opens the door.*

TOMPSON. [*Going to the door and calling:*] Williams!

[WILLIAMS *enters.*

WILLIAMS. Yes, sir.

TOMPSON. This is our cozy corner.

WILLIAMS. Very good, sir. Shall I go right in?

TOMPSON. Yes, if you will, please. [WILLIAMS *goes out.* TOMPSON *turns to* WALTERS.] Who makes the four at supper?

WALTERS. Miss Forster's young man and Mr. O'Neill.

TOMPSON. Hard on Mr. O'Neill! I suppose he's had to chum up a good deal with Miss Forster's friend?

WALTERS. Not very pleasant. Mr. Klauffsky's not Mr. O'Neill's sort exactly, and Mr. O'Neill's nothing like the actor Mrs. Rolfe is.

TOMPSON. You never forget and call her Mrs. Rolfe by mistake?

WALTERS. Oh, never. Always Mrs. Darcy!

TOMPSON. They can't get in without ringing?

WALTERS. No, sir. It's too bad you couldn't manage to put off the trial, sir! It's that's driven Mrs. Rolfe nearly crazy. She keeps saying if she only had more time, more time!

TOMPSON. We did our best.

WALTERS. Still, on the other hand, she's nearly used up, sir! Several times lately she's locked herself up in her room with hysterics. We could hear her way in our part of the flat.

TOMPSON. Poor woman! Poor, plucky woman!

WALTERS. When she found out to-day was Miss Forster's birthday, she had the idea of this party and supper after. She got Mr. O'Neill to get an admission for Mr. Klauffsky, to some private playing club for to-night. Mr. Klauffsky's a big gambler, and has been crazy to get

into one of these select, swell joints. After they're once at the table with a lot of champagne opened and everything's started, I'm to come in with a note to Mr. O'Neill. He will have tipped off Klauffsky to get away, too, and they'll both make a break to go. That's the plan.

[*A bell rings.* TOMPSON *puts his cigarette end out on a plate, and leaves it there on the table.*

TOMPSON. Here they are. Go on. I know the room!

[WALTERS *goes out Left and* TOMPSON *Right, after looking around to get his bearings.*

MARGARET. [*Heard outside.*] Has Mr. Tompson come?

WALTERS. [*Also outside.*] Yes, ma'am.

MARGARET. [*Still speaking outside.*] Listen at the door, and warn us when you hear the elevator.

They won't be here for some time yet. [*She enters. She is utterly changed. Her hair is dressed in an exaggerated ultra-fashion. She looks haggard and pale — and is wearing a very elaborate theatre gown, and a quantity of jewels.*] Where are you? [*Goes to the door to* TOMPSON.] Come, they aren't with me. [*She shakes his hand as he joins her.*] I'm so glad you're here.

TOMPSON. My dear, how hot your hand is!

MARGARET. And I must be a fright. You've got some one with you? For a witness?

TOMPSON. Yes, — Williams.

MARGARET. [*Sitting down beside* TOMPSON *on the sofa.*] I'm beginning to feel the strain tremendously. And to-night! Oh, the suspense of this night! Will it ever be over, — and yet I dread to have it over, for fear! When I was alone in the carriage just now, I had to break

down. I couldn't help it! I shall end up in being a regular hysterical woman. But at least I washed off the filthy paint and powder from my face with my tears!

[*She leans her head on the arm of the sofa and cries.*

TOMPSON. I'm afraid you're making yourself ill.

[*He lights a new cigarette.*

MARGARET. No, no, it's only that I feel to-night is my *last chance!* The case comes on to-morrow! I must appear in my true colors; and yet, after these two awful months, I haven't accomplished what I started out to do — what I must accomplish! What I will, to-night! Oh, I feel I shall go raving, stark mad!

TOMPSON. But how is it you are back before the others?

MARGARET. The best luck in the world, my

dear friend! I wanted so much to see you alone — if only for a minute. I was taken really faint during the third act. Fortunately, even she herself saw it, and advised me to go home, — that the air would pull me up, — put "me on my legs," I think she said! Oh, wait till you hear my vocabulary to-night! Thank Heaven, you won't be able to see me! I'm so ashamed of myself half the time. But the thought of Julian carries me through everything! If I only had more time, more time!

TOMPSON. Of course, if the case goes against us, we can appeal.

MARGARET. But then this opportunity's gone for good. Oh! [*Rising.*] I will *make that woman talk to-night!* If I can only keep my own head! It's wonderful what I have been able to stand, — in the way of dissipation, I mean.

I, who had no particular scruples about it, but just loathed the taste of alcohol in any way!

[*She walks up and down, feverishly.*

TOMPSON. But can't you pretend to drink?

MARGARET. Perhaps now, but I wouldn't at first. I was so afraid she'd get suspicious. And, ugh, the sickening, beastly hours I've passed with her!! But I'm sure I have her confidence now.

TOMPSON. Good!

MARGARET. She nearly lives here, you know. And if I only had had the time, I'd have managed that! Though she's the most loathsome thing a decent woman ever came in contact with, yet I share my table with her! — and I'd be willing to share one room, one bed even! — to get the truth from her!

TOMPSON. She's told you plenty of confidences. It's odd how she always fights shy of this one.

MARGARET. I should say she must have told me everything else in her life! And what a life! Oh, Julian, Julian, I'm glad you'll never know what I've been through! And if only it will prove worth while! I've got her several times right up to the subject, like a horse to a fence, — but she balks every time! I feel that she will tell me! I feel that she knows she's going to tell me; that she's afraid she's going to tell me, and doesn't want to! Once or twice, if I'd just pushed the subject a little farther, pressed just one question more, perhaps, she might have told it. And yet I didn't dare, because the very fact of my pressing her might have roused her suspicions. I've schooled myself not to show the slightest atom of curiosity about the affair.

TOMPSON. Hard! Very hard!

MARGARET. But she starts the subject herself, *apropos* of some new evidence or theory in a paper, perhaps. I look bored. I am only afraid she will hear my heart beat — it sounds like a cannonading to me! Fifty questions rush to my lips, but I bite them back! I make a weak effort to change the conversation, — weak enough not to really change it, but not strong enough to arouse a grain of suspicion in her sharp, ugly little nature! But so far, nothing done, nothing accomplished!

TOMPSON. Don't be discouraged. You have to-night, and it is your best chance yet!

MARGARET. Has Walters told you the scheme?

TOMPSON. Yes. How did you happen to take in Jimmy O'Neill?

MARGARET. Well, I had to have some man to pretend to be flirting with, and to have in hand

always. I'd known Jimmy a long time, — knew how faithful and trustworthy he was! Look what a devoted creature he's always been to Elsie Brewster, — who treats him really disgracefully! He was especially devoted to Julian, — looked on him as a sort of older brother, — so he seemed to me the best to choose.

TOMPSON. Walters seems to have done his part well.

MARGARET. Oh, he's been splendid! Such a help, and never once forgot, though even I do!

TOMPSON. Forgot what?

MARGARET. Oh, my mask! The other day, it was funny, I forgot all my acquired vulgarity for a moment, and was speaking quite naturally, just being myself. She began to laugh.

TOMPSON. Why?

MARGARET. That's it! What do you think she said? [*Laughing.*] "Stop putting on such airs with me, old girl! You are the most affected old thing sometimes, as if you were trying to make me believe you were a real lady!"

[*Enter* WALTERS *quickly and softly.*

WALTERS. [*Under his breath.*] The elevator's coming up!

[TOMPSON *rises. All half whisper.*

MARGARET. How can it be they're so soon! [*To* WALTERS.] Have you the note for Mr. O'Neill?

WALTERS. Yes, ma'am.

MARGARET. [*To* TOMPSON.] Your cigarette smoke. She might smell it and be suspicious.

TOMPSON. What a damn shame.

[*Throws his cigarette into the grate.*

MARGARET. Never mind! Give me one!

No! She might notice by some chance it wasn't one of our own.

[WALTERS *hands her the box from the table. She takes one.*

TOMPSON. But can you?

[*Handing her a lighted match.*

MARGARET. Oh, my dear man! I don't care about it, but if only it was *all* as easy as this!

[*Lights her cigarette. Bell rings.*

WALTERS. [*To* TOMPSON.] Lock the door, sir, to be sure.

[TOMPSON *goes out Right, and locks the door after him.* WALTERS *goes out Left.* MARGARET, *with a hasty look about her, rearranges* TOMPSON'S *chair, and goes out Right.*

CLAIRE. [*Heard outside.*] Well, Walters. Look out! Don't walk all over my dress with your great feet! How is Mrs. Darcy?

WALTERS. She seems all right.

CLAIRE. I said all she needed was air, and to get away from that rotten show.

KLAUFFSKY. [*Who speaks with a slight German accent. Off stage.*] Right you are! And there wasn't a single pretty girl on the stage. The theatre's no good since the highbrow took to the business.

[*Enter* CLAIRE, *calling* "Belle," *followed by* KLAUFFSKY *and* O'NEILL. CLAIRE *is very over-dressed for the theatre, and wears a huge picture hat.*

CLAIRE. Belle!

MARGARET. [*Calling out from her room.*] Yep!

[*Her voice, her manner, everything about her, is different — common and loud.*

CLAIRE. [*Closing the shutters.*] Stop doing yourself up. We're starved.

MARGARET. Oh, shut up! I'm getting into something comfy. Begin without me!

CLAIRE. [*To* O'NEILL.] Go on, you know her room. Bring her out! I'm going to take off my theatre hat, and be comfy, too.

[*She stands before the mantel and removes her hat.*

O'NEILL *goes to* MARGARET'S *door and knocks.*

CLAIRE. Hear him knock!

MARGARET. Who is it?

O'NEILL. Jimmy.

MARGARET. Well, Jimmy, you go away from there! If you want to know what's good for you, you just make tracks.

CLAIRE. [*Sitting down at the table. In a loud voice.*] I dare him to go in!

O'NEILL. What? I won't take a dare!

[*Turns the knob, but with really no intention of going in.*

CLAIRE. [*To* KLAUFFSKY.] Sit down, Louis.

[*He sits beside her.*

MARGARET. You come one step into this room, Jimmy, and I swear I'll kick you out!

O'NEILL. Hah — and she would, too! No, thanks!

MARGARET. I'll come out when I'm darned good and ready.

O'NEILL. Right you are, Mrs. Darcy!

KLAUFFSKY. [*Pretending to rise from his chair. To* CLAIRE.] Do you dare *me* to go?

CLAIRE. No, I don't! [*Pulling him down into his place.*] You're entirely too free with Belle, as it is. It's only that I trust *her*, or I'd make a damn row!

KLAUFFSKY. I'd like to see you! You must be hot stuff!

CLAIRE. Yes, you wouldn't want to see me

twice! I say — what's she doing anyway! Coming home pretending to be sick! I don't believe she was sick at all! Don't believe she came home alone! Jimmy! She's going back on you. [*She finds* TOMPSON'S *cigarette end on the plate.*] Yep! I knew it; here's a cigarette end, and not one of ours! [*She holds up the cigarette.*

O'NEILL. Nonsense!

CLAIRE. Nonsense yourself! Where is he? He can't have gone. She expected us to stay through the rest of the opera, but we weren't ten minutes after her. Aha! [*She is amused, thoroughly enjoying it.*] That's why she wouldn't come out. She's hiding a man in there. This is a scream! [*Calls.*] Belle! We've caught you! It's no use! Come on, bring him out!

MARGARET. [*From her room.*] I don't know what you're talking about.

CLAIRE. Well, I'll show you. [*To* O'NEILL.] Come along! There's only two rooms he can hide in, unless he's gone into the kitchen. I'll go into her room, if you won't, and you look into the next one. Belle, you're caught!

[*She goes to* MARGARET'S *room. Inside, the two women are heard,* CLAIRE *laughing and saying,* "Where is he? Come along out with him! Jimmy's looking in the next room," *etc.,* MARGARET *denying it. The two women are heard laughing and talking, but not distinctly, through the following speeches between the two men.* O'NEILL *had gone to door, Right; he tries it; it is locked.* KLAUFFSKY *is watching.*

KLAUFFSKY. [*Rising.*] By George, it's locked! She has got some one!

O'NEILL. The locked door don't prove it!

KLAUFFSKY. What'll you bet.

O'NEILL. [*Going quickly to him.*] Say, Klauffsky!

KLAUFFSKY. Look here, don't you mind. They're all like that! Let's teach 'em both a lesson! [*He makes a movement toward the door.*

O'NEILL. No! Listen, I say, — don't let on we know. See?

KLAUFFSKY. What the hell —

O'NEILL. [*Interrupting.*] No, I don't like a row! This is my business, and I want to see it through my own way — with your permission!

KLAUFFSKY. All right, all right!

O'NEILL. You want to play to-night, don't you?

KLAUFFSKY. Bet your life!

O'NEILL. Well, we'll carry out our original plan, and to-morrow I'll call around and have

it out with Mrs. — er — Darcy, quietly, by ourselves. I don't want to be made a fool of before Miss Forster.

KLAUFFSKY. I'm wise! Guess you're right!

CLAIRE. [*Coming back.*] No luck for me! How about you?

O'NEILL. Nothing!

CLAIRE. Well! I'm not satisfied, all the same. [*Enter* WALTERS, *with a cold chicken and a salad.*] Thank the Lord, here comes *food!* Oh, I say, Walters, — what gentleman's been here this evening?

WALTERS. [*Stares at her blankly. Then, after a moment, he says:*] Nobody that I've seen, — and I've been in all the evening.

CLAIRE. Well then, what's the meaning of this cigarette end on the plate? Are cigarette stumps on the bill of fare? [*Laughing.*

WALTERS. [*Looking.*] Oh, [*after a pause*] I'm very sorry! I don't know how I ever came to do it, but there's no use denying it, because they're my cigarettes!

CLAIRE. Well, you are a dirty, cheeky devil, smoking here in the parlor! And you wouldn't do it twice, if you were my servant, I can tell you that!

[WALTERS *goes out as* MARGARET *enters, having changed to a "tea gown." She is very much painted, rouged, etc.*

MARGARET. Now, I feel much better!

[*She joins* CLAIRE *and* KLAUFFSKY *at the table.*

CLAIRE. The trouble with you is you wear your corsets too tight!

[*She laughs and looks at the men, as if she'd said something clever.*

MARGARET. [*Laughs.*] Oh, come off, old girl,

— and anyway I have to do something to have any show up against a beautiful figure like you!

[WALTERS *enters with a magnum of champagne in a cooler, which he puts near the table, and goes out.*

CLAIRE. [*To* KLAUFFSKY.] What do you think of that for a lady friend! She and Jimmy here are the first two non-jealous people I've ever struck.

MARGARET. Why lug in Jimmy?

CLAIRE. Why, I believe you've got a man around here, somewhere, and he don't care a hang.

MARGARET. Because he knows it isn't true.

CLAIRE. Perhaps not.

KLAUFFSKY. [*To* CLAIRE.] What's the odds anyway, old girl. It's not *your* funeral!

CLAIRE. Hello! The party on my right has waked up!

[WALTERS *brings in another bottle of champagne, and puts it in the ice.*

MARGARET. That's all, Walters. You needn't wait. [WALTERS *goes out.*] Come now, let's have a toast! Break open that magnum, Jimmy, and drink the health and many happy returns —

CLAIRE. [*Interrupting.*] Hold on, not too many returns! In about two more years I'm not going to have any more of these birthday returns coming in! Celebrate — but no questions asked!

[JIMMY *opens and pours out the champagne.*

MARGARET. Go on, Klauff — spiel!

KLAUFFSKY. To the beautiful and sweet tempered little girl beside me — who eats up a lot of money, but who's cheap at the price!

MARGARET. Hear, hear!
O'NEILL. Hear, hear! [*Together.*
CLAIRE. Oh!

KLAUFFSKY. [*To* CLAIRE.] The best little —

[*He stops.*

ALL. What?

CLAIRE. Angel!

KLAUFFSKY. Ahem! Here goes, anyway. And the man who empties his glass first, gets a kiss. Hoch! [*They all clink glasses and drink,* MARGARET *echoing the* "Hoch." KLAUFFSKY *is through first.*] Give us a kiss!

CLAIRE. Go on! What do you take me for, before Mr. O'Neill.

[*Kisses her hand, and slaps his face with it. All laugh.*

CLAIRE. Go on, Belle. Give Jimmy one like that!

MARGARET. Shall I?

[*Kisses her hand to slap him.*

O'NEILL. No! [*Enter* WALTERS.

CLAIRE. Hello! More food! You're doing the grand thing, Belle!

WALTERS. A note for Mr. O'Neill.

[*Giving it.*

O'NEILL. I say, I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I know what this is! Yes, I tried to put off a business engagement; but, you see you didn't give me enough warning about the party, and I'll have to go!

KLAUFFSKY. It isn't that little New Orleans affair that I'm in, is it?

O'NEILL. Yes, that's just what it is.

[*Rising.*

KLAUFFSKY. Well, that is damn bad luck. [*Rising.*] It takes me, too!

CLAIRE. Oh, come, that's too thin! Business at this time of day!

MARGARET. True, for a fact, Claire. Don't let's let 'em go!

O'NEILL. [*To* WALTERS.] They didn't wait for an answer?

WALTERS. No, they said you were expected around. There was no answer.

O'NEILL. All right.

[WALTERS *goes out.*

CLAIRE. [*To* MARGARET.] Funny, I didn't hear the bell ring. Did you?

MARGARET. Yes. Just when we were drinking.

KLAUFFSKY. Awfully sorry, old girl.

CLAIRE. You're not really going?

KLAUFFSKY. Have to. Business is business!

CLAIRE. Oh, business be —. I don't believe you a minute! You've got something else on.

That's why you're breaking up our party. If you go, Louis, I'll never speak to you again! So long as I live!

KLAUFFSKY. Please yourself. Have you got a pen anywhere?

[*Taking a check-book from his pocket.*

CLAIRE. What you got there?

KLAUFFSKY. Check-book. Don't you recognize it?

[*He takes out a fountain pen and writes.* CLAIRE *winks at* MARGARET.

O'NEILL. [*To* MARGARET.] Good-by, Belle. Honest, I have to go!

CLAIRE. Oh, come off, Mr. O'Neill!

MARGARET. Yes! All right for *you*, Jimmy! Come along, one more drink, anyway!

O'NEILL. See you there!

[*He fills the glasses with champagne.*

MARGARET. [*Stopping him. Aside.*] Open the other bottle!

[*He does so, and fills the glasses again.*

KLAUFFSKY. [*To* CLAIRE, *handing her the check.*] Suppose you don't object to a little birthday present!

CLAIRE. [*Looking at it.*] I say, Louis, you are a brick! This *will* pull me out of a hole.

KLAUFFSKY. [*Lifting his glass.*] Well, here's luck!

CLAIRE. All the same, I don't take any stock in this midnight business or trip.

[*All drink, except* MARGARET, *who manages to empty her glass into the flowers in the centre of the table. All say good-by.* MARGARET *and* O'NEILL *exchange looks, as* KLAUFFSKY *goes to* CLAIRE.

CLAIRE. You're a nasty old pig to shake us, all the same!

KLAUFFSKY. How about to-morrow?

CLAIRE. I'll be busy all day to-morrow. Julian Rolfe's trial begins.

KLAUFFSKY. I meant dinner?

CLAIRE. Oh, all right!

KLAUFFSKY. [*To* O'NEILL, *who stands in the doorway.*] Will you bring Mrs. Darcy, O'Neill?

MARGARET. [*Quickly.*] No! I'm going to rest up to-morrow night, and try to get well.

CLAIRE. Don't you believe her. She's got a date with her friend of this evening!

O'NEILL. Oh, I guess I can take Belle's word!

[*Goes out.*

CLAIRE. My goodness! There's a good example for *you*, Louis!

KLAUFFSKY. Not on your life! Call for you at seven. Ta, ta, baby!

[*Goes out.*

CLAIRE. Louis, you're not going to leave me like that!

[*Follows him out.*

MARGARET. [*To* JIMMY.] You won't let him come back?

O'NEILL. Trust me! Good luck!

MARGARET. [*Almost breaking down.*] Jimmy, it's my last chance. If I fail —!

O'NEILL. You won't. Keep up your courage!

CLAIRE. [*Reëntering.*] I hate Louis' tobacco!

O'NEILL. Good-by.

CLAIRE. Good-by. [O'NEILL *goes out.*] Humph! They've gone out to have a good time on their own, I'll bet you.

MARGARET. Oh, well, what's the dif., old girl. We've got each other and a good supper! Come along, let's enjoy ourselves.

CLAIRE. [*Sits again at the table.*] No, just

give me some more wine. They've taken my appetite along with 'em.

[*Holds her glass.* MARGARET *fills it with champagne.*

MARGARET. I don't wonder Klauff's stuck on you, Claire. You look awfully well to-night.

CLAIRE. Is that why you hung back in the box all the time?

MARGARET. Yes — I looked like your mother.

CLAIRE. [*Laughs.*] You did look pretty seedy. I guess you can't stand my pace, Belle. I notice every little while you seem to shy at something!

MARGARET. Well, you know I think you're a wonder! You knock any other girl I ever knew out o' sight.

[*Lights a cigarette and takes two or three puffs.*

CLAIRE. What selfish beasts men are! My goodness! — and they're all alike! I never

knew really but *one* man who loved me more than himself! But there was one!

MARGARET. [*After a minute.*] Philip Long?

CLAIRE. Yep! Philip Long! At one time he'd have given up everything for me. Huh! [*A short pause.* MARGARET *waits.*] Do you blame me for hating the man who turned him against me?

MARGARET. No, I don't. [*She changes to* KLAUFFSKY'S *seat very quickly, sliding into it without really rising. She waits for* CLAIRE *to go on.* CLAIRE *sits looking into space and ahead of her. After a minute:*] No, I don't blame you at all. [*She fills* CLAIRE'S *glass. She waits.* CLAIRE *doesn't speak.*] *I'd hate* him in your place! [*A shorter pause.* CLAIRE *doesn't speak.*] Go on, drink your champagne, dear, and let's have a good talk!

[*Pushing* CLAIRE'S *glass towards her.*

CLAIRE. I like you! You're so sympathetic, and you aren't always wanting to talk about yourself! [*She drinks.*] Oh, the lies about men some girls can sit down and make up by the hour! — and think you're ninny enough to believe them! [*She notices* MARGARET *didn't drink.*] Say, you aren't drinking; go on, fill up! It'll do your head good!

[*She fills* MARGARET'S *and her glasses. She drinks some, and* MARGARET *pretends to.*

MARGARET. No, indeed, — in your place I wouldn't ever forgive — this other man — what's his name?

CLAIRE. Rolfe — Julian Rolfe. You bet I don't! Don't you worry about my forgiving him, either!

[MARGARET *grows more tense, puts out her cigarette, and leans a little nearer to* CLAIRE.

CLAIRE. Say, Belle, I've told you pretty nearly everything about myself. Suppose you take a turn now!

MARGARET. Oh, my life's so dull after yours! I'd rather hear you.

CLAIRE. Well, I've only got one story in my brain, to-night, and *that* I'd better not talk about! Are you always attracted by such young fellows as Jimmy O'Neill?

MARGARET. Why, yes, — I mean, I don't know, — I suppose so.

CLAIRE. Where did you come across him, anyway?

MARGARET. He's engaged to a lady friend of mine.

CLAIRE. [*Laughs.*] That's pretty good! I guess she won't consider you such a friend, when she hears you've taken him away from

her. Don't you dare treat me that way with Klauffsky.

MARGARET. No fear.

CLAIRE. Have you ever been really in love?

MARGARET. You mean *really*, so I didn't care if he had a cent or anything!

CLAIRE. Yep!

MARGARET. Yes, once.

CLAIRE. Really? Crazy about him? You've always seemed to me the cold sort! Go on, tell me about it.

MARGARET. I lived with him till about three weeks before I met you.

CLAIRE. Oh, I see; and that's what's the matter with you, now. You haven't got over it yet! Did you have a row? What's the matter?

MARGARET. Well, we're separated. But I hope we'll come together again.

CLAIRE. Don't you do it! Don't you be too soft-hearted! If he's left you once, he'd more'n likely do it again. Was it another woman?

MARGARET. [*Very slowly.*] Yes — it was — another woman — who separated us.

CLAIRE. Thought so!

MARGARET. Well, you hit it all right!

CLAIRE. I'll bet you hate her!

MARGARET. I do.

CLAIRE. Yes, you look it! I wouldn't want to have you look at me that way.

MARGARET. I hate her like you hate this man who kept Long from marrying you!

CLAIRE. I wonder! The man you love isn't dead.

MARGARET. Yes, but still — Claire, you've never told me. Do you believe Long was murdered?

CLAIRE. [*Looking at her, after a moment.*] Yes, I believe he was *murdered!*

[*A flash of disappointment passes over* MARGARET'S *face; to hide it, she rises, and puts her arm around* CLAIRE'S *shoulder and her head against* CLAIRE'S *head.*

MARGARET. Well, it was awfully hard for you, either way, and I'm sorrier'n I can say for you, old girl.

CLAIRE. You haven't finished your wine. Drink it up, and we'll have another! [MARGARET *is obliged to drink it.*] Good Heavens, the amount of this stuff Philip would get the best of! Never knew anything like it!

[*She fills their glasses.*

MARGARET. Really?

CLAIRE. Here's to his memory, and good luck to our side, to-morrow! [*She drinks;*

MARGARET *tries to drink, but the glass falls, spills and breaks.*] What's the matter?

MARGARET. I struck my hand on your chair. The d—d glass dropped. I'm nervous, to-night. I'm not well. Fill me Klauffsky's glass.

[*Pushing it towards* CLAIRE, *who fills it.* MARGARET *drinks some.*

CLAIRE. Klauffsky isn't going to have his legs pulled in his sleep.

[MARGARET *has come around, and sits at* CLAIRE'S *feet.*

MARGARET. Claire! Do you know what I wish you'd do, old girl? Give up your flat, and come here and stay.

CLAIRE. Oh, I don't think I ought to do that!

MARGARET. Yes, do! I want you to,—no bluff; come on! You might as well save that money.

CLAIRE. My goodness, it's awfully good of you, Belle, I must say!

MARGARET. Oh, that's all right. I get so lonely sometimes. I won't charge you a cent of rent.

CLAIRE. Well, if you really mean it, I suppose I could. My month's up next week.

MARGARET. Good! [*Rising.*] Then we'll consider it settled.

CLAIRE. How big is that other bedroom. Let's see.

[*She makes a movement toward the door.*

MARGARET. [*Stops her.*] No, darling, — I don't want you to see it now; not till I get it all ready for you. I'll surprise you with it, you'll see!

CLAIRE. All right!

[MARGARET *sinks into* O'NEILL'S *chair at the table.*

MARGARET. Good gracious, I wish we were in our wrappers, don't you? You'll see it will be ever so much nicer when you come here and live!

CLAIRE. Do you know, you're the nicest girl I ever met! Phil would have liked you!

MARGARET. [*Trying to look indifferent.*] Would he?

CLAIRE. Yep.

MARGARET. Why?

CLAIRE. Oh, you couldn't be too lady-like for Phil. Why, he even thought *I* was vulgar sometimes!

MARGARET. [*Moves about; she is too nervous to keep quiet.*] Still, that didn't keep him from wanting to marry you, did it?

CLAIRE. My dear, he was so ready to marry me that it's my own fault I didn't do it before that brute got a chance to break it up!

MARGARET. [*Seating herself again.*] Really?

CLAIRE. And that makes me hate him all the more.

MARGARET. How do you mean?

CLAIRE. Why, that I've only got myself to thank!

MARGARET. But, my dear girl, what I don't understand is how, when he was so in love with you, and you're so pretty and attractive and dear, — I don't see how he ever was persuaded to give you up.

CLAIRE. I guess you didn't follow the case very close when it first come out!

MARGARET. No. [*She rises again.*

CLAIRE. I say, am I keeping you up? Do you want to go to bed?

MARGARET. Not on your life! I don't want to go to bed for hours! I couldn't sleep a wink!

CLAIRE. It's funny you weren't interested in my case. Why, nobody talked about anything else for a week!

MARGARET. You see, I had my own troubles then, and I didn't care much about anybody else's. Tell me something about it.

[*Coming to* CLAIRE, *and leaning on the back of her chair.*

CLAIRE. Why, I've told you lots!

MARGARET. [*Very innocently.*] No, dear, you haven't. Why didn't he marry you, if he was ready to?

CLAIRE. Well, you see, Rolfe told a lot of lies about me, and prejudiced him in that way!

MARGARET. But I can't help thinking Long was a weak fellow to be persuaded by another man against you, dear.

CLAIRE. Here, don't you run down Phil! I won't stand it! He proved at the end he loved me, if any fellow ever did!

MARGARET. [*After a pause.*] How?

[*Slyly shoving the bottle of champagne toward her.*

CLAIRE. Oh, that's another story.

MARGARET. Go on, tell me. You know, everything about you's so interesting!

CLAIRE. Think so?

MARGARET. Yes. Why, I think you're perfectly wonderful! You know, you could write a great novel! You've got real genius the way you tell your stories. I'd rather listen to you than read, or go to a play, — really! Go on, and tell me some more!

[MARGARET *shoves the bottle a little closer toward* CLAIRE, *who at last sees it. She takes up the bottle.*

CLAIRE. Have some more — or had enough?

MARGARET. Oh, mercy, not yet!

[*Handing her a glass. Both drink.*

CLAIRE. I *like* you, Belle!

[*She is beginning to show the effects of the champagne.*

MARGARET. Go on, like a dear old duck!

CLAIRE. Where's Walters?

MARGARET. Gone to bed, of course, like a good servant.

CLAIRE. Sneaked out, more likely.

[*Looks around at the door to see if it is closed. A moment's pause.*

MARGARET. Why didn't you marry Long when you had the chance?

CLAIRE. Because I didn't want to do anything on the side! I wanted to wait and do the thing up in style, with a Church wedding and his

folks on hand. You know, I've always had an idea I'd kind o' like to get into Society.

MARGARET. Yes?

CLAIRE. The first time Rolfe got his hand in, I brought Philip round again. It was the very morning of the same night when it all happened.

MARGARET. Yes.

CLAIRE. Then he had a foolish idea of confronting Rolfe with me, to make me disprove all he'd said against me! So he brought us together at Phil's flat. Of course, if I'd had any idea of it, I wouldn't have had it for a minute.

[*Another pause.*

MARGARET. Yes?

CLAIRE. Look here, I can trust you, Belle! I'm talking very free with you. Honest, you'll never tell what I am telling you? I can trust you, Belle?

MARGARET. Why, Claire! How can you ask me that! Don't you know me yet?

[*She pours out more champagne, and both drink.*

CLAIRE. Yes, I *like* you.

MARGARET. Go on, dear, — it's just like an exciting novel.

CLAIRE. Well, you see, Rolfe accused me of everything under the sun to Phil, — right before me. It doesn't make any difference whether it was true or not, it was a *low-down trick!*

MARGARET. [*Emphatically.*] Yes, a dirty, low-down trick!

CLAIRE. Yes. And finally I got mad, and let out and told him so. But he'd got Philip dead against me by that time.

MARGARET. Um!

[*Making an almost invisible movement nearer.*

CLAIRE. Yes, and would you believe it, Belle, he got him to swear there and then he'd never marry me, so help him God!

MARGARET. No!

CLAIRE. *Yes!!* [*Then, almost crying, very much under the influence of the wine, now:*] What do you think of that?

MARGARET. I think it was rotten of him!

CLAIRE. [*Suddenly, angrily.*] But I'll make him pay for it! *I'll make him pay for it!*

MARGARET. [*Excitedly, as if in perfect sympathy.*] Yes! Make him pay good! Make him pay good!

CLAIRE. [*With a slight reaction in her manner, looking at* MARGARET.] Trust Claire Forster for that!

MARGARET. But couldn't you have made Phil break his promise?

CLAIRE. I don't believe so. He never broke a promise. When once he gave his word of honor about anything, you couldn't budge him! He was queer that way!

MARGARET. [*Leaning over nearer.*] What did you do then?

CLAIRE. When?

MARGARET. When he gave his word there in his room!

CLAIRE. Oh, I threw my arms around Philip, and begged him to take it back.

MARGARET. What did he say?

CLAIRE. He just turned around and asked Rolfe to leave us alone a minute.

MARGARET. And did he?

CLAIRE. [*After a short pause.*] Yes.

[*Another pause.*

MARGARET. And then what?

CLAIRE. I asked Phil if he meant what he'd said, and he answered "Yes!" Oh, but I was mad! Think what that meant to me! I told him I wished I'd never seen him; that he didn't love me and he never had loved me! I wish I hadn't said it, now. I don't know as it would have made any difference, all the same.

MARGARET. [*Breathlessly.*] Why?

CLAIRE. Because he stood up and faced me. I walked to the other side of the room, and was so mad at him! But he looked at me across the table and said — I can hear him now! — I hear him every night! — every time I shut my eyes I hear and see him —

MARGARET. [*With every muscle tense and strained.*] How?

CLAIRE. [*Forgetting* MARGARET.] "I love you so much," he said, "that, if I can't *marry you*, I

won't live without you." Oh, I can see him now! [*Putting her hands over her eyes.*

MARGARET. [*Leaning over and whispering, close to her:*] *Yes?*

CLAIRE. I saw his hand go behind his back, but I didn't dream! "My life's rotten anyway," he said, "and *I'm going to end it!*"

MARGARET. [*A cry almost escaping from her.*] *No!* [*She half rises in her seat.*

CLAIRE. [*Not hearing her or realizing; more to herself than to* MARGARET; *in a sodden, half-dead voice:*] And before I could get at him across the room, he'd shot himself!

MARGARET. [*Containing herself with a supreme effort, whispers tremblingly:*] *Philip Long shot himself?*

CLAIRE. Yes, shot himself right there before —

MARGARET. [*Losing all control, and letting*

herself go altogether, springs upon CLAIRE, *clutching her with both hands by her shoulders, and screams:*] *You Fiend!*

CLAIRE. [*Frightened, but not able to take it all in at once.*] *What?*

MARGARET. I am his wife! Do you understand? His wife! Julian Rolfe's wife! Julian — Rolfe's — wife!

CLAIRE. [*Dazed.*] What do you mean?

MARGARET. [*Still gripping* CLAIRE *with all her force.*] And he's free! Do you hear me, free!! Thanks to you! You! I've lived day and night with you; I've lied to you, and cheated you! I've sat and wallowed in the gutter with you! But it was all for Julian! Do you hear me? Mr. Tompson! Mr. Tompson!

TOMPSON. [*Unlocking the door, comes out, followed by the* INSPECTOR.] Bravo, Mrs. Rolfe!

MARGARET. [*Hysterically.*] Did you hear? Did you hear? Oh!

TOMPSON. Everything!

MARGARET. [*More hysterically.*] Every word?

TOMPSON. *Every word!*

MARGARET. Julian! Jul —

[*Her voice breaks, and she drops in a dead faint.*

[TOMPSON *rushes to her.* CLAIRE *sits, staring ahead of her, struck dumb with despair and fear.*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT IV

SCENE: *At the* ROLFES'. MARGARET'S *room. It is simply furnished, but with great taste. The walls are in pink and white stripes. There are pink and white chintz curtains, and a white bed. The time is morning.*

[MRS. HUGHES *is discovered in an arm-chair, her head resting on her hand. There is a tap at the door. She goes softly and opens it. It is* JULIAN. MRS. HUGHES *puts her finger to her lips. They both speak in whispers.*

MRS. HUGHES. Shh! — not yet! She's just fallen asleep!

JULIAN. May I *look?*

MRS. HUGHES. Yes. But no noise!

[JULIAN *tiptoes a few steps in, and stands looking at* MARGARET.

MRS. HUGHES. [*Going to him, puts her hand on his shoulder.*] Come! — or she might feel you in the room, and wake! I'll send for you the moment she does, but let her have the sleep now. She needs all she can get, to give her strength to see you.

JULIAN. When she was awake early this morning, her mind was still clear?

MRS. HUGHES. Perfectly! — as yours; clearer than my foolish old mind ever is!

JULIAN. She asked for me?

MRS. HUGHES. Yes!

JULIAN. What did you tell her?

MRS. HUGHES. That she should see you today.

JULIAN. Why didn't you send for me then?

MRS. HUGHES. The doctor said not to, — not till she'd taken some nourishment. Remember how weak she is. It's only a day since the fever broke. And think what a strain on her poor, exhausted self, — the joy of seeing you again!

JULIAN. She knows I am free since yesterday?

MRS. HUGHES. Yes.

JULIAN. Did she ask about the trial?

MRS. HUGHES. I wouldn't let her talk about that. I said you were free and she would see you to-day.

JULIAN. I want her to know it was she who did it! *She* herself!

MRS. HUGHES. Believe me, Julian, she only cares that you are free, and here with your love to help her to get well.

JULIAN. Well, I'll go to my room now. But send for me the moment she wakes, won't you? — the *moment* you can!

MRS. HUGHES. Yes, yes, my dear boy — yes!

[JULIAN *exits Left.* MRS. HUGHES *goes softly toward the bed to see if* MARGARET *has been disturbed. She is sleeping quietly. As* MRS. HUGHES *goes back to her chair, a soft tap is heard on the door. She goes to it and opens it.* WALTERS *hands her a box, which contains a bunch of violets.*

WALTERS. From Mr. Tompson, — and Miss Brewster is here. May she come in?

MRS. HUGHES. Yes. [WALTERS *disappears, and* ELSIE *immediately enters.* MRS. HUGHES *kisses* ELSIE, *and closes the door behind her. She whispers:*] She's asleep.

ELSIE. Has she had a good night?

MRS. HUGHES. Splendid! Both nurse and I had a good nap ourselves.

ELSIE. And Julian! He came home last night?

MRS. HUGHES. Yes, but the doctor wouldn't let him in her room.

ELSIE. She hasn't seen him?

MRS. HUGHES. Not yet. We're so afraid of the excitement.

ELSIE. But she knows he's free?

MRS. HUGHES. Oh, yes! Only, she is not to hear any details until she is well.

ELSIE. My night's rest has refreshed me wonderfully. You go now and lie down, and let me watch.

MRS. HUGHES. No, I'm not tired, and I promised to send for Julian the moment she wakes up. [*She opens the box of flowers.*

ELSIE. I'll go for Julian, and send him, so as not to be here when they meet. What lovely violets!

MRS. HUGHES. [*Reads the card.*] "In gratitude that the best and pluckiest assistant I ever had has turned the corner at last toward recovery. Affectionately, George Tompson."

ELSIE. What a nice message! I want to tell you something! I'm announcing my engagement to Jimmy O'Neill to-day.

MRS. HUGHES. Really! I am glad!

ELSIE. Yes, you know when I heard what he'd done to help Margaret, I caved right in, but I didn't want to have any celebration till Mr. Rolfe was free. So we're announcing it to-day. And I tell Jimmy, with such a clever detective as he around all the time, I won't ever dare to even *look* at another man!

[*Laughs gently.* MARGARET *wakes, turns, and slightly lifts her head, but they do not observe her. Through the rest of the scene she follows all they say with suppressed emotion, — keeping herself still, lest they should find out she is awake and stop talking, but moving and reflecting in her face all that what they say means to her.*

MRS. HUGHES. Did Jimmy tell you anything about yesterday afternoon at the trial?

ELSIE. Yes. He said there was a wonderful scene in court.

MRS. HUGHES. Do tell me about it! I didn't like to ask Julian.

ELSIE. Well, of course the whole thing was a foregone conclusion, after Mr. Tompson's cross-examination of the Forster woman. But, all the same, until the verdict was actually given,

there was still a certain sort of uncertainty; nobody knew what mightn't turn up!

MRS. HUGHES. What a bold fight she made!

ELSIE. Yes. You see, with Margaret ill and unable to appear, she thought she had a chance. That's why the case went as far as it did — with her ridiculous tale that she knew Margaret all the time — and only wanted to draw her out!

MRS. HUGHES. She reckoned without Mr. Tompson!

ELSIE. Exactly! Well, yesterday, it seems, their side took three hours to sum up. People were furious! And Mr. Tompson spoke only ten minutes!

MRS. HUGHES. Was that *enough?*

ELSIE. [*Still whispering.*] Well, it seems so!!! There was enormous applause when he'd finished

— which Judge Carey stopped. Then the Judge's address to the jury lasted barely five minutes! And the jury *came back, almost before they all got out!* Then, when Julian stood up, looking so calm, so true, so utterly incapable of ever having done this thing! — Jimmy says, nearly everyone's eyes were wet. [MARGARET *wipes away the tears that are falling from hers.* MRS. HUGHES *also.*] But — after the verdict!! Such shouts! Such cheers! The Judge didn't try to stop it! Everyone wanting to shake his hand, and one woman *kissed him.*

MARGARET. [*In a clear voice.*] *What* woman?

[*Both turn in amazement.*

ELSIE. Margaret!

MRS. HUGHES. [*Going to her.*] When did you wake up, dear?

MARGARET. Oh, long ago! I've heard every

word. Oh, what I'd have given to have been there! There'd have been *two women* kiss him, then!

MRS. HUGHES. My darling, why did you let us go on?

MARGARET. It hasn't done me any harm, mother. See how calm I am. I've had a nice little sleep, — quite enough!

MRS. HUGHES. Elsie has helped nurse you every day, Margaret. I'm sure you want to thank her.

MARGARET. [*Holds out a slender hand.*] Oh, yes! Elsie, come here. [ELSIE *goes to her, and takes her hand, which* MARGARET *holds tight.*] Thank you, dear girl.

ELSIE. I'm announcing my engagement to Jimmy O'Neill to-day.

MARGARET. Are you! That's splendid!

ELSIE. Yes, — wasn't he fine?

MARGARET. He was dear! I wish you all the happiness I know you'll have.

ELSIE. Thank you.

MARGARET. Mother, now I want to see Julian!

ELSIE. I will send him.

[*She goes out.*

MRS. HUGHES. [*Gives* MARGARET *the violets.*] From Mr. Tompson, with this message.

[*Reading the card.*

MARGARET. They're lovely. [*Smiles over the card.*] Dear Mr. Tompson! Mother dear —

[*She hesitates.*

MRS. HUGHES. Yes?

MARGARET. You won't feel hurt, will you, dearest, — but I want to see Julian *alone.*

MRS. HUGHES. Of course, my dear Margaret, I understand perfectly! I'm going.

MARGARET. [*Taking her hand.*] How good you've been. You're all worn out — *dear* mother!

MRS. HUGHES. Not at all worn out! It's a joy to your foolish old mother to think she has been able to do something for you! Now, rest a minute till he comes.

[*She smooths* MARGARET'S *pillow, and then leaves the room.* MARGARET *closes her eyes. There is a moment's pause. The door opens; it is* JULIAN.

JULIAN. Margaret!

[*He goes to her.*

MARGARET. [*Trying to lift herself on her elbow.*] Don't say anything, Julian. To talk to you would be more joy than I feel I can bear just now.

JULIAN. Margaret! [*He sits on the bed beside her, putting his arm around her.*

MARGARET. Just lift me up in your arms —

so — and let my head rest on your shoulder — yes, like that!

[*He kisses her tenderly.*

MARGARET. [*Smiling up into his face.*] Oh, how quickly I shall get well, now!

THE CURTAIN FALLS

THE TRUTH

A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

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TO

MARIE TEMPEST

WITH GRATEFUL ADMIRATION FOR

HER TRIUMPHANT BECKY ON

APRIL 6, 1907

C. F.

THE TRUTH

ACT I. At the Warders', New York
Thursday Afternoon.

ACT II. At the Warders'.
Saturday Afternoon, just after lunch.

ACT III. At Stephen Roland's, Baltimore.
Saturday Night.

ACT IV. At Stephen Roland's.
Monday Morning.

THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

WARDER.

ROLAND.

LINDON.

SERVANT AT THE WARDERS'.

BECKY WARDER.

EVE LINDON

LAURA FRASER.

MRS. GENEVIEVE CRESPIGNY.

MESSENGER BOY.

Produced in Cleveland, Ohio, October, 1906, and later played at The Criterion and Lyceum Theatres, New York, with the following cast: —

Warder	William J. Kelly
*Roland	J. E. Dodson
Lindon	George Spink
Servant at the Warders'	Hodgson Taylor
Becky Warder	Clara Bloodgood
Eve Lindon	Mrs. Sam Sothern
Laura Fraser	Elene Fraser
Mrs. Genevieve Crespigny	Zelda Sears
Messenger Boy	Frederick Harrison

* Played in New York by William B. Mack, and also by John Emerson.

Produced at the Comedy Theatre, London, April 6, 1907, with the following cast:—

Warder	Allan Aynesworth
Roland	Dion Boucicault
Lindon	Dawson Milward
Servant at the Warders'	Horton Cooper
Becky Warder	Marie Tempest
Eve Lindon	Grace Lane
Laura Fraser	Sybil Carlisle
Mrs. Genevieve Crespigny	Rosina Filippi
Messenger Boy	Donald Calthrop

Revived by Winthrop Ames at The Little Theatre, New York, on April 11, 1914, with the following cast;—

Warder	Sydney Booth
Roland	Ferdinand Gottschalk
Lindon	Conway Tearle
Servant at the Warders'	Lionel Hogarth
Becky Warder	Grace George
Eve Lindon	Isabel Irving
Laura Fraser	Fanny Hartz
Mrs. Genevieve Crespigny	Zelda Sears
Messenger Boy	Guthrie McClintic

ACT I

At MRS. WARDER'S. *An extremely attractive room, in the best of taste, gray walls with dull soft green mouldings, old French chintz curtains, furniture painted to match the walls and covered with the same chintz. Some old colored engravings are on the mantel shelf and a couple of eighteenth-century French portraits on the wall. On the Left is a mantel, and near it a large writing table against the back of a low sofa which faces the audience; on the table a telephone; an armchair and a small table on the Left; a Baby Grand piano in the upper left corner of the room. Some consols and tables in the room; four windows at the back, through which one sees the*

park. Doors, Right and Left; books, photographs, flowers, etc., on the tables and consols.

A smart, good-looking man-servant, JENKS, *shows in* MRS. LINDON *and* LAURA FRASER. *The former is a handsome, nervous, overstrung woman of about thirty-four, very fashionably dressed;* MISS FRASER, *on the contrary, a matter-of-fact, rather commonplace type of good humor — wholesomeness united to a kind sense of humor.* MRS. LINDON *is the sort of woman warranted to put any one on edge in the course of a few hours' consecutive association, while friction with* MISS FRASER *is equally certain to smooth down the raw edges.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Coming in to a chair near the Centre with quick determination.*] You have no idea when Mrs. Warder will be in?

SERVANT. No, madam.

MRS. LINDON. She was lunching out?

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

LAURA. [*With a movement to go.*] Come! She may be playing bridge and not come home for hours.

MRS. LINDON. [*Firm, though irritable.*] I will wait till half-past five. [*To* SERVANT.] If Mrs. Warder comes in before that, we will be here.

[*Nervously picks up check-book from the writing-table, looks at it but not in it, and puts it down.*

SERVANT. Very good, madam.

[*Goes out Left.*

LAURA. [*Goes to* EVE.] My dear, you must control yourself. That man, if he has half a servant's curiosity, could easily see you are excited.

MRS. LINDON. Yes, but think! She's been

meeting Fred probably every day for the last two months, although she knew I had left his house, and always pretended to me she never saw him!

[*Sitting beside the writing-table.*

LAURA. [*Sitting Left.*] You shouldn't have come here at once. You should have waited till you had time to think over your information and calm yourself a little.

MRS. LINDON. I couldn't wait! Becky! One of my oldest friends! One of my bridesmaids!

LAURA. What!

MRS. LINDON. No, she wasn't, but she might have been; she was my next choice if any one had backed out.

LAURA. Probably Fred's appealing to her sympathy, — you know your own husband!

MRS. LINDON. [*With a disagreeable half-laugh.*]

Yes, I know him better than she does! What I don't like is her secrecy about it after I'd made her the confidante of my trouble!

LAURA. I thought *I* was that?

MRS. LINDON. You are — another! But you mustn't forget that I have gone to Becky in hysterics and begged her to make it up for me with Fred.

LAURA. Were you perfectly frank with her?

MRS. LINDON. Perfectly! I told her the truth, and more too! I told her I loved Fred in spite of his faults — Good Heavens! if a woman had to find a *faultless* man to love! — I've asked her advice.

[*Rising nervously and going to the sofa.*

LAURA. You haven't taken it!

MRS. LINDON. That doesn't make any difference! Who ever does? [*Sitting on the sofa.*] She

owed me her loyalty instead of flirting with Fred behind my back.

[*She opens the cigar box on the writing-table behind her and then bangs it shut.*

LAURA. Perhaps she's really trying to make peace between you in her own way!

MRS. LINDON. Does it look like it? Actually telling me yesterday she wouldn't trust herself in his presence for fear she'd lose her control and tell him what she thought of him! — and all the time she had an appointment to meet him this afternoon — in the *Eden Musée,* if you please!

LAURA. [*With comic disgust.*] Oh! Horrors!

MRS. LINDON. Yes, in the chamber of them! If that isn't compromising!

LAURA. Eve!

MRS. LINDON. And Tom Warder so nice! *Everybody* likes him!

[*Picks up stamp box and bangs it down.*

LAURA. Including Becky. That's the point. Becky *loves* her own husband. What does she want of yours?

MRS. LINDON. She loved Tom Warder when she married him, but that was in 1903! Besides, Becky always liked having men fond of her whether she cared for them or not.

LAURA. Nonsense!

MRS. LINDON. She's what the French call an "*allumeuse*" — leads them on till they lose their heads, then she gets frightened and feels insulted!

LAURA. But you claim she *does* care for Fred!

MRS. LINDON. My dear, a magnetic man like Fred has a way of winding himself around a woman and keeping himself wound as long as he wishes! even when *she doesn't* wish, — look

at me! I'd give anything to throw him off for good, but I can't stop being in love with him!

LAURA. [*Who has moved over to the chair beside the sofa, pats* EVE's *hand.*] Poor old Eve! Well, when she comes, what are you going to do?

MRS. LINDON. Give her one more chance to tell me the truth! I'll ask her outright when she saw Fred last.

LAURA. But if she keeps on with her "bluff" of not seeing him, you can't tell her she lies without making a horrid scene, and what good would that do?

MRS. LINDON. Exactly! She'd never acknowledge she was lying but just go on! I may appeal to Tom Warder himself!

[*Rises and goes to mantel, looking at the fly-leaves of two books on a table which she passes.*

LAURA. No!

MRS. LINDON. Why not? We've been friends since babies.

LAURA. You *wouldn't!*

MRS. LINDON. I don't accuse Becky of anything dreadful! Besides, it will be for his good too, as well as mine, — he knows Fred, and I'll wager anything he'll be as eager as I to stop any excess of friendship with him. [*Goes up to the window.*] Sh! here she is! and a man with her!

LAURA. [*Rises, excited, and joins her.*] Who?

MRS. LINDON. [*Going to the other window.*] I can't see.

LAURA. [*Joining her at the second window.*] Suppose it should be —

MRS. LINDON. Exactly! If she hears I'm here, she'll never let him in. [*She starts with a new idea and goes to the door Right.*] The window in

that hall juts out; perhaps we can see the front door from there. Come quickly!

[*Tries to pull* LAURA *out Right.*

LAURA. I don't approve of what you're doing at all.

MRS. LINDON. Oh, come!

[*They go out and close the door behind them.*

[*The* SERVANT *shows in* BECKY *and* LINDON, *Left.* BECKY *is a pretty, charming, volatile young woman, sprightly, vivacious, lovable. She is dressed ultra smartly, and in the best of taste.* LINDON *is dapper, rather good-looking, though not particularly strong in character, and full of a certain personal charm. He also wears very fashionable clothes. He is a man whose chief aim in life is to amuse himself.*

SERVANT. Mrs. Lindon and Miss Fraser were

waiting to see you, madam; they must have gone.

BECKY. [*With a humorous raising of the eyebrows and a look to* LINDON.] Oh! — I'm so sorry!

[*The* SERVANT *goes out.*

LINDON. Gee! what a narrow escape.

LAURA. [*Off stage Right, pleading loudly.*] Eve! Eve!! Come!!!

MRS. LINDON. [*Off stage Right, loudly.*] I will not. I will run my own affairs my own way.

BECKY. [*Who has heard this, with an amused, mischievous expression.*] They are there! Do you suppose they saw you?

[*They lower their voices slightly.*

LINDON. Well, — Eve can see through most things, but not through the walls! Good-by.

[*He starts to hurry out, but* BECKY *stops him.*

BECKY. You must come back! That's what I

brought you home with me to-day for — to talk about Eve. This estrangement has gone on long enough. I've come to the conclusion you're as much to blame as she is, — or more.

LINDON. I like *that* from *you!*

BECKY. I mean it, and if she wants you back, you've got to go.

LINDON. Well, let me get a cocktail first.

BECKY. I'm serious.

LINDON. So'll I be if Eve comes in and catches me.

[*Going.*

BECKY. [*Going with him.*] I'll let you out — but I expect you here again in half an hour. Do you understand? [*They go out Left. Off stage.*] You're to come back at six.

LINDON. [*Off stage, at a distance.*] All right.

[EVE *comes in excitedly from the Right.*

MRS. LINDON. I think it is Fred! Watch from the window! I'll stay here in case Becky comes in. [*She comes to the writing-table.*] I'd like to scratch her eyes out!

[LAURA *comes in and goes to right of the sofa.*

LAURA. It *was* Fred.

MRS. LINDON. [*Gives a tigerish, half-controlled, hushed cry of rage.*] The *wretched little beast!*

[BECKY *comes in with a start of surprise. She beams.*

BECKY. My dears! What a pleasant surprise! Why didn't Jenks tell me? Where in the world did you drop from? Laura, darling!

[*She kisses* LAURA, *who is very unresponsive, having pressed* MRS. LINDON'S *hand as she passed her.*

MRS. LINDON. We heard you come in, — we thought *with* some one, — and as I'm rather upset,

we went in there till you should be alone. If you are busy, don't let us interrupt.

[BECKY *shows that she is relieved when she hears they don't know* FRED *was there.*

BECKY. O dear, no, I'm not busy. I came home alone, — you must have heard me talking with the servant. I've been playing bridge since luncheon.

[BECKY *and* LAURA *sit on the sofa.*

MRS. LINDON. Where?

BECKY. Clara Ford's, our usual four.

[LAURA *and* EVE *exchange glances.*

MRS. LINDON. Why! I saw her lunching at Sherry's.

BECKY. [*Quickly, after only a second's hesitation.*] Yes, she couldn't play to-day, but it was her turn at her house, so we went all the same — and — er — er — Belle Prescott took her place.

[*Another surreptitious look passes between* LAURA *and* MRS. LINDON.

LAURA. Did you win?

BECKY. Yes, a hundred and fifty!

LAURA. A hundred and fifty? Good!

MRS. LINDON. [*Who has seated herself in the chair beside the sofa.*] Becky, Laura knows all my troubles; she's the bosom I weep them out on.

BECKY. Oh, come, I've gathered a few dewey diamonds off my laces! Well, how is Fred behaving? Has he shown any sign yet?

MRS. LINDON. Not one. I thought perhaps you'd have some news.

BECKY. [*Looking away.*] I? How should I have?

[*Leans over and smooths her skirt.* MRS. LINDON *exchanges a look with* LAURA.

MRS. LINDON. You said two days ago for me

to keep silent and wait, and Fred would make an advance.

BECKY. And so he will, I'm sure! unless you do what you threatened. [*To* LAURA.] I tell Eve if she starts a suit for separation or does anything of that sort publicly, Fred may be furious and accept the situation, no matter how much of a bluff it might be on Eve's part.

LAURA. Very likely.

MRS. LINDON. I thought perhaps you meant to see Fred and have a talk with him?

BECKY. No! [MRS. LINDON *and* LAURA *exchange glances, as* BECKY, *rising, rings bell Right.*] What good would that do? To have the reconciliation mean anything it must be of his own volition. He must come for you, Eve, because he misses you, because he wants you back. [MRS. LINDON *joins* LAURA *on the sofa and talks in a*

loud and excited whisper to her as to BECKY'S *very evident prevarication.* SERVANT *enters Right;* BECKY *speaks to him aside, amusedly watching them, and then comes above table. As she comes back.*] Well?

MRS. LINDON. I believe there's another woman in it!

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] I knew she was jealous! [*To* MRS. LINDON.] That's just the sort of thing that has made quarrels all along between you and Fred.

[*She comes to her.*

MRS. LINDON. Well, if you knew all I've had to forgive Fred, and all I have forgiven, you'd realize I had good reason always for my share of the quarrels.

BECKY. Listen to me, Eve. You're a luckier woman than you know!

MRS. LINDON. [*Startled.*] How do you mean?

[LAURA *puts her hand on* EVE'S *shoulder to calm her.*

BECKY. Because, instead of having the forgiveness always on his side, you have the blessed privilege of doing the forgiveness yourself. [MRS. LINDON *gives a falsetto snort.*] You may smile if you like —

MRS. LINDON. [*Interrupting.*] Oh, no, thank you. I don't feel at all like smiling!

BECKY. Well, honestly, I envy you. [*Takes* EVE'S *hands in hers.* MRS. LINDON *looks once at* LAURA *questioningly, and back again quickly to* BECKY.] You know I love Tom with my whole heart — and it's a big heart for a little woman — and yet I keep him forgiving me — forgiving me something or other all the time. I'd be afraid his forgiveness would wear out, only it's in his

soul instead of his body, and if our bodies wear out, our souls *don't* — do they? Already at the very beginning of our life together I owe him more dear forgiveness than I can ever repay, and believe me, Eve, such a debt would be unbearable for a woman unless she *adored* her husband.

MRS. LINDON. You've too much sentiment — I'm practical.

BECKY. [*Sitting down in the chair at Centre.*] Does being practical give you one-half the happiness my "sentiment" gives me?

MRS. LINDON. Nonsense! My sympathies are with the one who has the forgiving to do.

BECKY. You mean, like all selfish people, you sympathize with yourself, so you'll never be happy, even if you get Fred back.

MRS. LINDON. [*Startled, angry.*] *If?* What do you mean by that?

[*Looks at* BECKY, *then at* LAURA, *sharply, then back at* BECKY.

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] Say *when* instead! *when* you get Fred back. Trust me, teach yourself to be grateful that it is *you* who have to forgive, and not the other way round.

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises, facing her, almost triumphantly, fully persuaded that* BECKY *is in the wrong.*] I knew when I came here you'd make excuses for him.

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] You've misunderstood me. I'm *trying* to make them for you.

MRS. LINDON. Thank you. *You* need excuses more than I do.

LAURA. [*Rises, alarmed.*] Eve!

MRS. LINDON. I am perfectly well aware that I made a very serious mistake in coming to *you* of all women!

BECKY. [*Rises.*] In that case I think it best to consider the matter closed between us.

MRS. LINDON. You can think what you please, but I have no such intention!

LAURA. Eve!

[*She sits again on the sofa.*

Really Becky has shown herself reasonable and kind, and you've said enough to-day. We'd better go.

BECKY. I should have to ask you to excuse me in any case, as I have an engagement in a few minutes.

[MRS. LINDON *looks meaningly at* LAURA.

MRS. LINDON. [*To* BECKY.] I intend to have the whole thing out now!

[WARDER *enters left.*

[WARDER *is a strong and sensible, unsuspicious man, — no nerves and no "temperament," noth-*

ing subtle about him; he is straightforward and lovable.

WARDER. Oh, excuse me!

BECKY. No, come in, Tom; it's Laura and Mrs. Lindon.

[LAURA *and* MRS. LINDON *say* "How do you do," *as* WARDER *comes into the room. He greets them in turn.* BECKY *writes in pencil on a sheet of paper on the desk.*

TOM. I wanted to ask Becky if she wished to go to a theatre to-night.

BECKY. Yes, I should like to. [*She indicates to* TOM *that she wants* EVE *and* LAURA *to go, and having finished writing, comes to him.*] I'm sorry, but you really must excuse me. [*Slipping into* WARDER'S *hand the note she had secretly written.*] Mrs. Lindon and Laura *are going.* What are *you* going to do now?

[MRS. LINDON *looks again meaningly at* LAURA.

WARDER. I thought I'd go round to the club till dinner.

BECKY. [*Relieved.*] That's right. I shall be engaged till half-past six, — er — Mrs. Clayton is coming to see me about the Golf Club at Roslyn — and — lots of things. You needn't hurry back.

[*She gives him an affectionate little squeeze of the arm and goes out Right. He looks down at the paper slyly and reads it.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises and goes to* TOM.] Tom, if you've nothing in particular on at the club, would you give me half an hour?

LAURA. [*Rises and goes to* EVE.] Eve, you haven't the time yourself; you must come with me.

WARDER. [*Suppressing a smile as he finishes*

reading the note, he is a little embarrassed.] Well — really — Eve — I don't know, — I'll tell you how it is —

MRS. LINDON. Oh, I don't mean here! I know Becky wrote you a note telling you not to let me stay, didn't she?

WARDER. [*Laughing.*] She did — you see, she has an engagement. [*Reading from the paper, good-naturedly.*] "Get rid of Eve, I want the room."

MRS. LINDON. At six o'clock.

[*Glances meaningly at* LAURA.

WARDER. [*Casually.*] Is it?

MRS. LINDON. To see *Fred* in!

LAURA. Eve! be sensible!

WARDER. No, it's for Mrs. Clayton about Roslyn.

MRS. LINDON. Then why must she be rid of

me? Georgia Clayton and I are the best of friends, and I have as much to do with Roslyn as Becky.

WARDER. [*Still pleasantly.*] I suppose Beck has a good reason, if she cared to tell us.

MRS. LINDON. I *know* Becky has an appointment *here,* at *six,* with Fred.

LAURA. You don't *know* it, Eve!

MRS. LINDON. I *do.*

WARDER. [*Still pleasantly.*] In any case that is Becky's and Fred's business, isn't it?

MRS. LINDON. You *know* Fred!

WARDER. Yes!

MRS. LINDON. Well?

WARDER. You don't want my opinion of Fred at this late day! I also know Becky!

MRS. LINDON. Becky and Fred meet every single day.

LAURA. [*Interpolates.*] She *thinks* so.

WARDER. What are you talking about?

MRS. LINDON. What I *know!* And if you'll wait here with me a few minutes now, in spite of what Becky said, you'll see *Fred* and not Mrs. Clayton arrive.

WARDER. If your husband is really coming, it was probably to spare you that Becky spoke of Mrs. Clayton, and I shouldn't think of embarrassing her by waiting.

MRS. LINDON. [*Disagreeably, irritatingly.*] Oh, you don't mind, then?

WARDER. Almost any man, my dear Eve, would mind your husband meeting his wife every day! I only think you've been misinformed, or only half informed, that's all.

MRS. LINDON. You are aware that Fred and I have been separated for two months?

WARDER. Yes, Becky told me.

LAURA. [*Looking at her watch.*] It's almost six now. Come, Eve.

WARDER. [*Going toward the door, Left.*] Yes, I'm afraid I must ask you —

[*Rings electric bell on wall beside the door.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Going to him.*] Tom, for the sake of our boy and girl friendship, walk home with me, and let me speak plainly.

LAURA. [*On the other side of* WARDER.] Mr. Warder, please don't go.

MRS. LINDON. [*To* LAURA, *angry.*] What do you mean? [*To* WARDER, *pleadingly.*] I've no other man in the world to go to; I need advice Won't you give me yours?

WARDER. [*Looks at her a moment, hesitates, then says.*] My advice? Of course, if you wish that. [*The* SERVANT *appears in the doorway in*

answer to the bell. To SERVANT.] My hat and coat — and say to Mrs. Warder I'm walking home with Mrs. Lindon.

[*He goes out Left.*

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

[*Follows him out.*

[LAURA *looks significantly at* MRS. LINDON.

LAURA. If you keep on, there soon won't be a soul left in New York whose advice you haven't asked and not taken!

MRS. LINDON. Well, it's my *own trouble;* I can do what I like with it. What are *you* going to do now?

[*She sits in the armchair at the Left.*

LAURA. [*Going to her.*] Don't tell him all you think you know about Becky.

MRS. LINDON. *Think!*

LAURA. It will be a very great mistake.

MRS. LINDON. Laura, I'll tell you the truth; I've had Fred watched by private detectives for over a month, and I have a list of dates and places of their meetings to more than prove what I say.

LAURA. How dreadful of you!

MRS. LINDON. Oh, wait till you get a husband, and then you'll sympathize more with a woman who is trying to keep one!

LAURA. But these places where they meet?

MRS. LINDON. Are respectable so far as I know. But *daily* meetings my dear, *daily!*

LAURA. And you'll tell Mr. Warder?

MRS. LINDON. I don't know yet how much I shall tell. What are you going to do now?

LAURA. Wait till to-morrow! Give yourself time to recover, to consider.

MRS. LINDON. [*Simply repeats.*] What are you going to do now?

LAURA. [*Deliberately crosses to the chair at Centre and sits.*] Stay and see Becky.

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises, delighted.*] Oh, do! Stay till Fred comes, and catch her!

LAURA. No, no! I've finished with this now. I don't sympathize with what you're going to do.

WARDER. [*With hat and coat, in the doorway Left.*] Ready?

MRS. LINDON. Yes.

WARDER. Good-by, Laura.

LAURA. Good-by. [MRS. LINDON *goes out Left with* WARDER. *After the outside door is heard to close* BECKY *comes into the room hurriedly. She stops suddenly on seeing* LAURA, *turns and tries to steal out. Just as she gets to the door,* LAURA *catches her.*] Becky!

[BECKY *turns and their eyes meet.* BECKY *laughs, realizing she is caught.*

BECKY. Oh, you didn't go with them?

LAURA. No!

BECKY Had enough of Eve to-day?

LAURA. Not enough of you.

BECKY. [*Sings instead of speaks.*] "Thank you!"

[*She puts her arm around* LAURA, *and they sit on the sofa.*

LAURA. Becky, why won't you be frank with Eve?

BECKY. I was.

LAURA. No, you didn't tell the truth about seeing Fred.

BECKY. Oh, that!

LAURA. Yes, that!

BECKY. I may have seen him once or twice, that's all.

LAURA. Exactly what Eve says — you don't tell the truth!

BECKY. It's false! I never told a malicious lie in my life. I never told a fib that hurt any one but myself!

LAURA. Tell Eve the truth. Make her have confidence in you. She says if you cross the ferry to Jersey City, you say you've been abroad.

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Well, so I *have!* Laura! I'm doing my best to make Eve happy. I can't do any more than my best, and if I do it at all, I must do it my own way!

LAURA. You've seen Fred to-day.

BECKY. No, I haven't.

LAURA. Becky! He came home with you just now!

BECKY. What makes you think so?

LAURA. I saw his back on the steps with you.

BECKY. Oh, I see — spying on me? Well, you made a mistake in the back.

LAURA. I know it was Fred Lindon.

BECKY. And I know it wasn't.

LAURA. You're not seeing him every day?

BECKY. Certainly not! But what affair is it of yours, if I do?

LAURA. We're all friends, and you're making Eve wildly jealous.

BECKY. That is entirely her own fault, not mine.

[*The* SERVANT *enters Left with a bill on a small silver tray.*

SERVANT. Pardon me, madam, a man with a box and a bill to collect.

BECKY. [*Taking bill.*] A bandbox?

[*She opens bill.*

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

BECKY. [*To* LAURA.] Oh, my dear, such a duck of a hat! And only sixty-five dollars. I

saw it on my way here and couldn't resist buying Are hats a passion with you?

LAURA. [*Uninterested.*] Yes, rather.

BECKY. I told them to send it C.O.D., but I didn't suppose it would come till to-morrow and I haven't a cent!

LAURA. I thought you said you won a hundred and fifty at bridge?

BECKY. No, no, my dear, you misunderstood me, I lost. [*To* SERVANT.] Tell the man if he can't leave the box, to take it back and call later; say Mrs. Warder is out.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*Goes out with the bill, Left.*

LAURA. You said you *won* at bridge!

BECKY. Oh, you tedious person! You hang on to anything like a terrier, don't you! I said I won because I didn't want Eve to think I'd lost;

I never can bear to own up I've lost anything before Eve. [*Laughs, pulls* LAURA *by the arm.*] Good-by!

LAURA. I won't go yet.

BECKY. [*Urging her.*] You must. I have an engagement.

LAURA. *With Fred Lindon!*

BECKY. It is not. [SERVANT *enters and announces* "MR. LINDON." LINDON *follows in. He is surprised to see* LAURA, *but instantly covers his surprise. Going to* LINDON, *quickly.*] Oh, what a surprise!

LINDON. Surprise? Am I early?

BECKY. [*Indicating* LAURA.] Sh! Yes, sur prise. [LINDON *sees* LAURA *and makes an amused grimace.*] But I can only give you a very few minutes. I have an engagement, haven't I, Laura?

[*As they shake hands.*

LINDON. Oh hello, Laura!

LAURA. [*Very dryly.*] How d'you do, Fred?

LINDON. How's Eve?

LAURA. [*Embarrassed.*] Very well — at least not very — yes, she is of course very well! She's just left here.

[*She adds this pointedly.*

LINDON. Oh! sorry I missed her! Give her my regards when you see her, and say I'm glad she's well.

[*He goes to the piano, sits on the bench, and plays.*

LAURA. [*Rises indignant.*] I shall do nothing of the kind.

[*She starts to leave the room.* LINDON *runs what he is playing into "Good-by, little girl, Good by."*

BECKY. [*Offering her hand.*] Good-by.

LAURA. [*Pretends not to see* BECKY'S *hand.*] Good-by.

[*She goes out Left.*

BECKY. [*Going to the piano.*] *They both saw you come back with me!*

LINDON. [*Still playing, improvising. Laughing.*] No! Did they?

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Yes, but it's no laughing matter! Eve is jealous.

LINDON. [*Stops playing.*] What right has she? Did she expect me to sit alone in the drawing-room for two months straining my ears to hear her ring the front door bell?

[*He continues playing.*

BECKY. They know we've been meeting every day, — at least they think so. *Have* we?

LINDON. [*Still playing.*] No!

BECKY. Yes, we *have! Haven't* we?

LINDON. [*Stops playing.*] Well, yes, if you want the truth.

BECKY. [*Goes to sofa and sits.*] There's no use telling a story about it. I've nothing to be ashamed of, — I did it with the best of motives.

LINDON. [*Goes to* BECKY.] Oh, don't spoil it all, Becky, with motives!

[*He leans over the arm of the sofa to talk to her.*

BECKY [*Laughs.*] You know Eve mustn't be jealous of me!

LINDON. [*Earnestly.*] Now you're not going to let her break up our little —

BECKY. [*Interrupting.*] Fred, how much do you like me?

LINDON. [*Smiling.*] I daren't tell you!

BECKY. No, I mean *really!*

LINDON. So do I!

BECKY. I believe you are fond of me.

LINDON. I am!

BECKY. And I like you to be.

LINDON. [*Placing his hand on hers on the sofa's arm.*] Because?

BECKY. [*Slowly drawing her hand from his.*] I like men to like me, even though it really means nothing.

LINDON. Nothing?

[*Rather chagrined.*

BECKY. [*Amused.*] I like it for myself, and besides I think it's a compliment to Tom!

LINDON. [*Mockingly.*] Oh! Oh! I say! Becky!

[*He moves to the chair Right beside* BECKY *and drawing it nearer sits facing her.*

BECKY. But with you there was a special reason.

LINDON. [*Is encouraged. Draws a little nearer to her.*] Yes?

BECKY. Of course you have perfectly understood why I've seen so much of you.

LINDON. You've been my friend.

BECKY. I've sympathized with you.

LINDON. You've been the only real glimpse of happiness I've had for months in my life.

BECKY. Don't be rhetorical! no man sounds sincere, when he talks pictures. I'll tell you why I wanted you to come back this afternoon.

LINDON. [*Taking her two hands.*] To make me happy!

BECKY. [*Pulling her hands away, and patting his half seriously.*] Yes, [*He leans over toward her.*] by making you realize it's time you went to Eve and asked her to come back.

LINDON. [*Sinking back in his chair.*] Nonsense; Eve's made a row and frightened you.

BECKY. How frightened me? I always meant

when I'd got you where I wanted you, to influence you to make it up with Eve. She adores you!

LINDON. She has an odd way of showing it.

[*He rises and leans against the mantel beside the sofa.*

BECKY. You don't want every woman to show her love in the same way.

LINDON. I don't want any other woman to show me she loves me in Eve's way.

BECKY. Come now, you're unfair to Eve! I'm going to sympathize with her a little. Granted that she is jealous, granted that she doesn't always control her temper! — what woman worth while does!

LINDON. [*Laughing.*] But she ought to trust me — as *you* do.

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Oh, I'm not your wife.

I wouldn't trust you for a minute if I were married to you!

LINDON. How about Tom?

BECKY. Of course I trust Tom.

LINDON. And I trust Eve.

[*Laughing.*

BECKY. Oh! but it's not the same thing. You trust Eve because you don't care enough. I trust Tom because — well, in one little word, he is perfect and I adore him!

LINDON. Sounds boring!

BECKY. Eve's proved she loves you with a *big* love! She's proved it by forgiveness. That's the proof of a love it's not easy to get and even harder to deserve! You've got it — [*He moves toward her.*] we won't go into the deserving part! But if only half that she says and one quarter of what every one else says of you is true, you ought

to go on your knees to her in gratitude if she is willing to take you back.

LINDON. [*Sits on the arm of sofa, half laughing.*] She will! She's left before.

BECKY. You love her, Fred?

LINDON. [*Casually.*] No, I love you!

BECKY. Nonsense! I mean really! Promise me you'll go to Eve to-morrow and ask her to come back.

LINDON. [*Slides down on to sofa.*] Not yet — give me another month!

BECKY. You'll lose her!

LINDON. No, there are certain things you can't lose — try as hard as you like!

BECKY. That isn't funny.

LINDON. She's been urging you to do this.

BECKY. Nothing of the sort! She's too proud. And she mustn't dream I've had anything to do

with your going to her. No woman really wants to accept her happiness like a pauper at the Lady Bountiful hands of another woman. She might *think* she was grateful to me, but she wouldn't be! With a disposition like Eve's you'd have another quarrel inside a fortnight. No! Eve must think you've come to her spontaneously because you can't live without her. [*He whistles. She rises.*] You can whistle, but you'll never get another woman half so good to you as Eve! Make her think you want her back. Make *yourself* think you want her back, and you don't know how happy you'll be — first in making her happy, and second in finding you are yourself.

[*He takes hold of her hand; she draws it away quickly and sits in the armchair on the opposite side of the room.*

LINDON. What are you doing away over there?

BECKY. Oh, I thought it was getting a little crowded on the sofa.

LINDON. And must I give up my visits with you?

BECKY. Of course.

LINDON. Oh, well, if that's the price, I don't want happiness, it costs too much!

BECKY. You won't need sympathy any more. You can write me a little note and say: "Becky, I thought I loved you, but it was only a heart being caught on the rebound. Thank you for being sensible and pitching the heart back! Thank you for seeing my real happiness was in making Eve happy."

LINDON. You know that doesn't sound like me!

BECKY. Not like your foolish *old you*, but like your sensible *new you*, who has found out you can have a woman friend without getting

sued for damages, — which has been your usual experience, I believe!

LINDON. Becky! Don't rob the graves!

BECKY. Well, will you go to Eve and beg her to come back?

LINDON. [*Rises.*] No!

BECKY. Fred! The price of my friendship is your peace with Eve!

LINDON. [*Going to* BECKY.] But if I consent, I may come to see you?

BECKY. Yes.

LINDON. Eve, my darling wife, forgive me! Come to my arms and stay there — for five minutes — consider it done! Where, to-morrow?

BECKY. The Metropolitan?

LINDON. No, let me come here to-morrow and what time?

BECKY. [*Rises.*] Four — but to say *Good-by!* [*She means it.*] The *last* visit!

LINDON. Oh! well, we won't cross that bridge till we come to it! and I'll make you a bet if you ever do send me away for good, do you know what will happen?

BECKY. [*Amused.*] No, what?

LINDON. In a day or two you'd send for me to come again after all!

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Why?

LINDON. Because you like me better than you think you do!

BECKY. [*Going to the writing-table.*] Oh, really!!

LINDON. [*Following her.*] Yes, really! and you know — though you may not acknowledge it to yourself, still you know just how strong my feeling is for you.

BECKY. [*Turning toward him.*] But I do acknowledge it, and I am grateful and pleased to have you care for me.

[*She pulls the chair beside the table in front of her.*

LINDON. [*Pushing chair away.*] "Care for you!"

BECKY. [*Pulling chair back.*] Yes! and I want to show my appreciation by making you happy.

LINDON. Eve's jealousy has frightened you, but you'll forget it to-morrow!

BECKY. [*Really not understanding.*] How do you mean?

[*She looks at him questioningly, innocently He looks back knowingly with a half smile not believing her. A pause.* WARDER *comes*

in Left. He looks from one to the other, then speaks pleasantly.

WARDER. Oh! How are you, Lindon?

LINDON. Good evening, Warder.

[*Both men stand; an awkward pause.*

BECKY. [*Sitting in the armchair Right.*] Sit down, Tom.

[*He does so on the chair by the table.* LINDON *sits on the sofa. A moment's pause.*]

LINDON. Do you come up town generally as late as this?

WARDER. Oh, no, I've been up some time.

[*Second awkward pause.*

BECKY. Did you get the theatre tickets?

WARDER. No, I forgot; I didn't go to the club. I'll telephone from here. [*Very casually.* Has Mrs. Clayton gone?

BECKY. Who?

WARDER. Mrs. Clayton. You said —

[BECKY *interrupting.*

BECKY. Mrs. Cl— ? Oh! Yes! She's gone.

[*Awkward pause.*

LINDON. Have you been to the club?

WARDER. [*Very casually.*] No, I walked back with your wife to her mother's.

[*Awkward pause.* BECKY *and* LINDON *exchange glances.*

LINDON. [*Half humorously.*] I hear Eve is looking very well.

[*Pause.*

WARDER. By the way, will you have a whiskey and soda, a cocktail or something?

BECKY. Or *tea?*

LINDON. Tea? poison to me! No, thanks, I must be getting on.

[*All rise; then, after a moment of embarrassment,* WARDER *speaks.*

WARDER. Yes?

LINDON. I've an early, melancholy, bachelor's dinner at seven.

BECKY. It's your own fault! Think how well Eve looks in a dinner dress, and what a delightful hostess she always is.

LINDON. Yes, Eve's all right in a crowd! [*Shaking hands. To* WARDER.] Forgive my domestic affairs intruding. Mrs. Warder has been kind enough to advise me a little! Good-by!

[*Going.*

WARDER. I'm sure her advice is good. You'd better take it!

LINDON. Perhaps! — but in homeopathic doses! [*To* BECKY.] Good-by! [*To* WARDER.] Bye, Warder.

[*Laughing, he goes out Left.* WARDER *and*

BECKY, *alone, look at each other,* — BECKY *questioningly,* WARDER *half puzzled.*

BECKY. Well! Has Eve been weeping on *your* bosom, too?

WARDER. No, I think she *scratched* it, if she did anything!

BECKY. [*Half amused, half worried.*] *How* do you mean? [*The* SERVANT *enters with a letter which he gives to* BECKY.] When did this come?

SERVANT. A little while ago, but madam gave orders not to be interrupted.

[*He goes out.* WARDER *gives* BECKY *a quick, sharp look, which, however, she doesn't notice.*

BECKY. From father! He can't want more money already!

WARDER. *You* sent him how much two days ago?

BECKY. [*Goes above the writing-table as she opens the letter.*] *You* sent him, you generous darling, three hundred dollars. I had given him his allowance the beginning of the month.

WARDER. And gone already! Of course, he's been at the races this week! No more. Becky, — is it true you've been seeing Lindon every day lately?

BECKY. [*While she reads her letter.*] No! — yes! [*Looks up at him.*] I mean no, certainly not!

WARDER. [*Smiling.*] Which is it? or do I take my choice?

BECKY. [*With a little laugh.*] I've seen something of him. I'm sorry for him. — Father's in more trouble.

WARDER. That's an old story, and this is something new. Eve is jealous of you.

BECKY. [*Looks up at him.*] Are you, of Fred Lindon?

WARDER. No!

BECKY. [*Goes quickly to him and kisses him and pushes him down on to the sofa.*] Bless you! You're right, and that's my answer to Eve!—Father does want more money!

WARDER. We send no more till next month, not one penny. Come here! [*He makes her sit on the arm of the sofa beside him. She puts her arm about his neck and hugs him.* WARDER *continues.*] You haven't seen Lindon almost daily for the past month, have you?

BECKY. No.

WARDER. You haven't met him by appointment at the Metropolitan, Eden Musée, or any such places?

BECKY. Eve's jealousy gives her the most

ridiculous ideas! When I have been with Mr. Lindon, it has been principally to talk about Eve, and entirely with the desire to try and reconcile them.

WARDER. Grant that! But it's not true about all these appointments?

BECKY. No!

WARDER. [*With his arm about her waist.*] I believe you love me better than all the world?

BECKY. Than all the world, and every world, and all the planets put together, Mars, Saturn, and Venus. Yes. I love you *even* more than Venus!

[*Laughing and giving him another caress.*

WARDER. I have every confidence in you and your motives. But I have none in Lindon's — so I want to-day's visit to be his last, my dear.

BECKY. [*Rising, a little uncomfortable.*] All right.

WARDER. Own up, now, hasn't he tried to make love to you?

BECKY. [*Leaning on the back of the chair, facing him.*] No!

WARDER. Not a bit?

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] Well — maybe — just a tiny bit — but not in earnest.

WARDER. [*Rising, angrily.*] I was sure of it! the damn puppy! Becky, I've heard him swear there's no such thing as a decent woman if a man goes about it in the right way!

BECKY. Oh, you men are always hard on another man whom women like.

WARDER. I know what I'm talking about *this* time, and you don't.

BECKY. [*With dignity.*] I judge by his be-

havior to me. He may have led me to believe he likes me very much, — he ought to like me, I've been very nice to him, — and I suppose it flattered me — [*Smiling.*] it always does flatter me when men like me, — and I think one feeling I have is pride that you have a wife whom other men admire! If Mr. Lindon has made — er — respectful love to me, that's a compliment to *you.* [WARDER *laughs, sincerely amused.*] But he has *not* insulted me.

WARDER. [*Smiling.*] That's your fault. You are the kind of woman he doesn't believe exists, and he can't make up his mind just what tactics to adopt.

BECKY. He knows perfectly, unless he's deaf and blind, that my seeing him — a few times only — has been solely to reconcile him with Eve.

WARDER. That sort of man *is* deaf and blind except to his own rotten mental suggestions. He is incapable of believing in your philanthropic motive, so let it go, dear.

BECKY. [*Places the letter on the writing-table and sits behind it.*] Eve has frightened you!

WARDER. [*Walks away.*] Not a bit; I laughed at her fears that you were fascinated by her precious worm! But I do consider that unwittingly you have been playing a dangerous and — forgive me, darling — [*Going to her.*] a very foolish game. Already some one believes you've been seeing Lindon every day. You haven't! But that doesn't make any difference! Every one will believe you have seen him twice a day in another month if you continue seeing him at all. No woman can have the "friendship" of a man like Lindon for long without — justly or unjustly

— paying the highest price for it. [*He places his hand tenderly on her shoulder.*] You wouldn't know what the price was till the bill came in, — and then no matter how well you knew and those who love you knew you had not danced, all the same the world would make you pay the piper!

BECKY. I do your sex greater justice than you! I don't believe there's any man, no matter what he has been, whom some sincere woman can't waken to some good that is in him!

WARDER. [*Smiling.*] That's all right, but you please let Eve wake up Lindon! [*He moves away.*] Had you made any arrangements to ring a little friendly alarm on him to-morrow?

BECKY. No! And that, of course, was Eve's suggestion!

WARDER. Well, never mind so long as it's understood his visits here are at an end. You

don't expect him to-morrow, and should he come, you won't see him, eh?

BECKY. Exactly! [*Smiling.*] When I told him to-day his visits were over, what do you think he said?

WARDER. I couldn't guess.

BECKY. He said I'd change my mind and send for him!

WARDER. And if you did, do you know what he would do?

BECKY. No, — what?

WARDER. Consider it a signal of capitulation, — and ten to one take you in his arms and kiss you!

BECKY. [*Rises.*] He wouldn't dare!

WARDER. I'm not sure, but at any rate I am serious about one thing in this discussion.

BECKY. [*Goes to him and places her hands*

lovingly on his arms.] Our first "domestic row."

WARDER. [*Turns her about and holds her in his arms, — she leans against him.*] And last!

BECKY. Amen!

WARDER. [*Very seriously.*] And I echo the sentiment, I know, of every sane husband in New York — Lindon's attentions to a man's wife are an insult, and as your husband I won't have them.

BECKY. [*Leaving his arms, pushes him playfully into a chair and sits near him in the corner of the soja.*] Well, give me my woman's last word. I still think you are unfair to him — but I love you all the same!!

WARDER. You'd better!

BECKY. I'm so afraid you'll get — not tired, but — well — too used to me!

WARDER. Not till I find you twice the same! Now, — what about your father?

BECKY. He only wants fifty dollars, and says he must have it; let's send it.

WARDER. No, that's the way it's been always. Our "no" has always ended "yes," so of course he hasn't believed in it. This time it must stay "no."

BECKY. [*Plaintively.*] You won't send it?

WARDER. No, and you mustn't.

BECKY. Oh, I haven't got a cent. But he says he's in real trouble and he must have it.

WARDER. It's always the same thing! And we must put a stop to his inveterate, indiscriminate gambling. If we don't teach him the lesson he needs soon, before we know it he will be in real trouble that ten thousand times fifty dollars mightn't get him out of.

BECKY. But he promises not to —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] My dear! He has given his word over and over again, and broken it twice as many times! If it isn't a race course, it's a bucket shop — or some cheap back door roulette table, and it's got to stop! Stop now!

BECKY. But, Tom —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] Now, Becky! You know how hard it is for me to refuse you.

BECKY. It's only —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] You must trust my judgment, and your father must learn, and a small matter of fifty dollars is a good chance to begin; it can't be so very serious! so that's ended.

BECKY. [*Half humorously, half discouragedly.*] Yes, I guess it's ended!

WARDER. Now, will you try to realize that I only want to do what's best and right?

BECKY. [*Kisses him.*] Yes, but I can't help feeling sorry for father.

[*Smiling.*

[*The* SERVANT *enters Left with a bill and a bandbox.*

SERVANT. Beg pardon, madam, but the man has come back.

BECKY. [*Takes the bill.*] Oh, my hat! Very well, I'll ring when I'm ready. Leave the box on the chair.

SERVANT. [*Puts bandbox on the chair at Left.*] Very good, madam.

[*He goes out.*

BECKY. [*Smiling, embarrassed.*] I'm nearly as bad as father!

WARDER. Lose at Bridge to-day?

BECKY. No, I didn't play to-day, but I couldn't resist a hat, my dear, the most adorable ha'

[WARDER *laughs* "Oh, Becky"] No, honestly! Much more beautiful than the one I bought day before yesterday! I'm ashamed but I did order it to come home, and I haven't a penny.

WARDER. [*Teasing her.*] Send it back!

BECKY. Oh, you wouldn't be so heartless! and what would they think at the shop?

WARDER. [*Getting out his pocketbook.*] How much is it?

BECKY. [*Hesitates a moment.*] Fifty dollars!

WARDER. [*With a slight quizzing look.*] Just what your father wants.

BECKY. Yes! Give the money to father and I'll send back the bonnet.

WARDER. No, my darling. You know it isn't the money with your father, it's the principle of the thing. I've not got the money, I must write a check.

[*He looks for the check book. She quickly gets a check book from table and hides it behind her back.*

BECKY. Your check book's upstairs.

[*She rings the bell on the desk.*

WARDER. I thought perhaps yours was here?

BECKY. No, mine's used up, as usual!

WARDER. All right.

[*He goes out Right, as the* SERVANT *enters.*

BECKY. [*Opening the bandbox.*] Send the man here, Jenks.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*He goes out, Left.*

BECKY. [*Takes out the hat and looks at it admiringly.*] What a duck! [*Heaves a great sigh and puts it back and starts to re-tie the strings, as the* MAN *enters.*] I want you to take this back to Mme. Flora, and say Mrs. Warder is extremely

sorry, but Mr. Warder has taken a violent dislike to the hat, so she cannot have it. She will be in later to choose another.

MAN. Yes, ma'am.

[*He goes out with the bandbox, Left.* BECKY *sits down and starts to write a letter hurriedly.* WARDER *comes in with check.* BECKY *hides the letter she is writing.*

WARDER. [*Coming to the table.*] Here's the check, all but the name of the payee. Where's the bill?

BECKY. Make it out to me, and I'll endorse it.

WARDER. Why?

BECKY. O dear! [*Half worried, half smiling.*] I told you a sort of fib! The hat was only thirty-five dollars, but I wanted the extra fifteen for something else. Please don't be angry —

WARDER. [*Laughing.*] I'm not angry, though

you know I dislike even little fibs. Why didn't you tell me if you're hard up? I'll give you this and make out another for the bonnet shop.

BECKY. No, you needn't do that; the man's gone now for the change, — I told him.

WARDER. [*Finishes the check and gives it to her.*] Becky! you're not going to send this to your father? I forbid that.

BECKY. No, no, darling! [*Takes the check.*] And now you get dressed. I'll be up in a minute You know it always takes you twice as long as it does me when you wear a white tie! It's a long play and begins early.

WARDER. I'll bet you I'll be dressed before you start!

[*He hurries out, Right.*

BECKY. [*Rings the telephone on the desk.*] Hello! Hello, 6304–72d. [*Writes on her inter-*

rupted letter with one hand and listens with the receiver in the other. After a moment.] Hello! 6304–72d? Is Mr. Lindon — yes, ask him to come to the 'phone and speak to 2759–38th. [*Listens as she writes.*] Hello! Is that you? Yes — yes — Oh, [*Laughs.*] don't be silly! I called you to say I am very sorry, but our engagement for to-morrow is off! O double f! No, for good! For *Good!* [*She adds very quickly.*] Good-by! [*Hangs up the receiver and writes. In a moment the telephone bell rings furiously; at first she ignores it; then she makes a grimace at it; then she takes up the receiver.*] Hello! No, Central, I wasn't cut off. No, I don't want the number back, thank you, I hung up the receiver. I can't help that! You needn't re-connect us — say the line is busy! [*Hangs up the receiver.*] Mercy! when you don't want them!! [*Rings the electric bell on*

the desk, endorses the check, puts it in the letter, and seals the envelope. The SERVANT *enters as she addresses letter.*] I want you to take this at once and put a special delivery stamp on it. I want it to reach my father in Baltimore to-night.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

BECKY. Have you any idea whether it would be delivered there to-night or to-morrow morning?

SERVANT. One or the other, madam.

BECKY. [*Smiling.*] That I know! Make haste.

[*The* SERVANT *goes out Left, as* WARDER, *all dressed, save that his tie hangs loose, rushes in, Right. She rises quickly.*

WARDER. Who's ready first?

BECKY. [*Laughing.*] Oh, you've raced! But while you're tying your tie I'll —

WARDER. [*Interrupts.*] No, I came down purposely to get you to tie it for me!

[*He stands ready.*

BECKY. [*Ties it during the following speeches.*] You forgive me for telling you that little fib?

WARDER. Yes, if it's to be your last one.

BECKY. My *very* last.

WARDER. No more of those wicked little white lies, even, that you know you do amuse yourself with, and distress me?

BECKY. No, no! Really! I've opened the cage door and let all the little white mice fibs out for good!

WARDER. And you do love me?

BECKY. Do you want to know how much I love you?

WARDER. Yes, how much?

BECKY. How deep is the ocean in its deepest spot?

WARDER. As deep as your love for me.

BECKY. Oh, that isn't fair! You're stealing my thunder! There! [*The tie is finished, and she pushes him playfully into the chair by the writing-table.*] One good turn deserves another. [*With her arms about his neck she slides on to his knee, like a child.*] I've let Perkins go out, and you *must* hook me up the back.

[*And both laugh gayly as he embraces her and*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

The same scene as Act I. BECKY *and* WARDER *are sitting on the sofa, both drinking coffee after lunch.* WARDER *puts his coffee cup on the table as the curtain rises.*

BECKY. Aren't you going to smoke, darling?

[*Putting her coffee on the table behind her.*

WARDER. Yes.

[*Getting out cigar.*

BECKY. Give it to me. [*She takes it, and cuts the tip with a gold jewelled cutter which she wears on a chain about her neck.*] For six years you've not smoked a cigar in my presence that I haven't clipped, have you?

WARDER. No. And how about anybody else's cigars? That hasn't cut off any tips for — Lindon, I hope!

BECKY. No indeed! He only smokes cigarettes.

WARDER. [*Amused.*] Is that the only reason?

BECKY. Oh, you darling! I believe you are a little jealous of Lindon and I adore you for it.

[*Hugging and kissing him.*

WARDER. Well, you go on adoring, but I'm not a bit jealous of Lindon.

[*Rises, and lights his cigar with a match from the table behind them.*

BECKY. You're not going back to the office? It's Saturday.

WARDER. No — I think I'll have a game of racquets with Billy Weld.

BECKY. Do! You love it so. I've regretted

their invitation to dine with them next week, Friday. I said we're going out of town.

WARDER. But we're not We've people dining here, haven't we?

BECKY. Yes, but I think going out of town sounds so much more interesting Besides, then they can't possibly be offended that they aren't asked here. Grace'll be consumed with curiosity, too, as to where we're going!

[*Amused.*

WARDER. But if they see us Friday?

BECKY. They'll think we haven't gone yet.

WARDER. But if Billy meets me down town Saturday morning?

BECKY. He'll think you took an early train back.

WARDER. The truth's so simple, so much easier — why not tell it?

BECKY. Don't worry, it'll be all right. I'm sorry I told you if you're going to worry!

[*He goes to kiss her; she stops him.*

WARDER. [*Sitting beside her.*] What's up?

BECKY. I've decided I kiss you too often. I'm a shop-keeper with only one line of goods — no variety, and I'm cheapening my wares. [WARDER *laughs.*] I don't want you to feel you're getting a left-over stock of stale, shopworn kisses! I want you to feel the supply doesn't equal the demand.

[*She kisses him. The* SERVANT *enters and they move apart.*

SERVANT. Mrs. Lindon to see Mr. Warder.

BECKY. [*To* WARDER.] Eve! [*To* SERVANT.] Ask her to come in here and have a cup of coffee and a cigarette.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*Goes out.*

BECKY. [*Beaming.*] Come to tell us of the reconciliation!

WARDER. Why she didn't let him go and be thankful! I don't see what she can love in a little outsider like Lindon!

BECKY. Thank Heaven all women don't love the same kind of a man! [*Steals a caress.*] Think what an awful fight there'd be!

SERVANT. [*Coming back.*] Mrs. Lindon sends this message — she wishes to see *Mr.* Warder

[BECKY *and* WARDER *look at each other, surprised and amused.* BECKY *makes a grimace.*

WARDER. Very well, show Mrs. Lindon in.

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*

WARDER. More trouble!

BECKY. They've quarrelled again already! It must have been *his* fault.

[SERVANT *shows in* MRS. LINDON *and goes out.*

MRS. LINDON. [*To* WARDER, *not noticing* BECKY.] How do you do?

WARDER. How do you do, Eve?

BECKY. How do you do, Eve! Sit down.

MRS. LINDON. I wish to see Tom for a moment, Becky.

BECKY. What for?

MRS. LINDON. I wish to see him alone.

BECKY. Why?

MRS. LINDON. That, Becky, is my affair — and *his* perhaps!

BECKY. Oh, really! I suppose I ought to become very jealous now, and do dreadful things. [*Smiles.*] But don't have me for a moment on your mind, Tom.

[*Kisses her finger, puts it to Tom's lips, he kisses it, and she goes out Right.*

WARDER. What is it, Eve? You know I have no earthly secrets from Becky.

MRS. LINDON. It's about her secrets from you!

WARDER. Nonsense!

[*Half laughs.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Sitting in the chair by the table near Centre.*] I only hinted at things the other day — and only hinted at one-half the truth.

WARDER. [*Sitting on the sofa.*] Excuse me, Eve, but you've got hold of the wrong half. I asked Becky outright — that is our way always. She denied practically all you said.

MRS. LINDON. You can't make me believe you've lived as long as you have with Becky Roland and not found out — she lies.

WARDER. [*Rises quickly in anger.*] It's because you're a woman you dare say that to me, but you

know I don't have to listen to you, so don't push our old friendship's claim too far.

MRS. LINDON. I said Becky and Fred met often on the sly.

WARDER. [*Sitting again.*] Which isn't true!

MRS. LINDON. No! They meet *every day!*

WARDER. Eve, I think your trouble has gone to your brain.

MRS. LINDON. [*Still quietly, but with the quiet of the crater when the volcano is alive beneath.*] I can prove to you that Becky has seen Fred every day and more than that! When we had our talk two days ago, they had agreed together that he was to go through a form of reconciliation with me for appearance' sake, and their meetings were to continue. She had an appointment with him for yesterday.

WARDER. That I know isn't true, for she swore to me the opposite.

MRS. LINDON. Yes, you frightened her off and she broke the engagement by telephone, which made Fred perfectly furious!

WARDER. [*Rising, goes to mantel and knocks his cigar ashes into the grate; absolutely unconvinced, he continues with a cynical smile.*] And how did you obtain this decidedly intimate information?

MRS. LINDON. [*In an outburst, the volcano becoming a little active.*] From him! I knew they hadn't met for two days —

WARDER. [*Interrupting.*] How?

[*He looks up curiously.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises and turns away, a little ashamed.*] I've had Fred watched for weeks!

WARDER. [*Astonished, rises.*] You mean you've —

[*He hesitates.*

MRS. LINDON. Yes! [*Coming to the desk, and speaking across it to him.*] I took their not meeting for a sign that after all Becky had given him up, and I had the impulse to go to him — to go back home. He turned on me like a wolf — said I'd meddled with his affairs once too often — that I'd frightened Becky into breaking off with him, that he had been on the point of making up with me for the reason I've told you, but now it was done for! I'd raised your suspicions, I'd given the whole thing away to everybody, and I could congratulate myself on having broken off his and my relations for good — forever! Oh, how could he insult me so when it was only his love I was asking for?

[*She sinks down in the chair above the table, and buries her face in her hands and sobs.*

WARDER. [*Forgets himself and exclaims.*] But how can you — how can you still care for him after everything you've gone through? It's beyond my understanding!

[*He throws his cigar angrily into the fireplace.*

MRS. LINDON. The history of the world is full of women who love like me, but no men — I don't know why; but I suppose that's why you can't understand it. Why couldn't he realize it is for happiness not appearances I've been fighting? And now it's over, for I know when he means what he says — and he told me, like a low brute, I could go to — where you can imagine — for all he cares, or for all he'll ever live with me again.

[*Her voice fills up again.*

WARDER. I should think if you went to the address he proposed, it would insure at least an eventual meeting!

MRS. LINDON. [*Who has not heard and does not understand.*] What?

WARDER. I beg your pardon! I made a foolish joke! Well? [*With a hearty long breath of relief.*] Now do you feel better?

MRS. LINDON. [*Feebly, not understanding.*] Better?

WARDER. Yes, now you've got it all "off your chest"? To-morrow you'll be all right and ready to forgive again. Shall I call Becky?

[*Going toward the bell beside the mantel.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Rises.*] You're going to accuse her before me?

WARDER. [*Stops and turns.*] Accuse her? [*Laughs.*] No — I don't believe a word you've

told me. I'd take Becky's unspoken denial against Fred's sworn statement any day.

MRS. LINDON. [*Going to him.*] Then here's yesterday's report from the agency! — and Thursday's, and Thursday's includes the report of the telephone central who connected Becky with our house when she broke off the appointment with Fred, — that telephone girl has told us many interesting things!

WARDER. Stop! Stop this! I won't listen to you — at any rate not behind Becky's back. I'm not a jealous, suspicious woman with good reason to believe the worst. I'm a straightforward, decent man, I hope, and I know I've every reason to believe absolutely in my wife, God bless her! [*He moves away and then turns upon her.*] Why have you come and told me this, anyway?

MRS. LINDON. [*Staggered.*] Why — why?

WARDER. [*Angry.*] Yes, why? to me of all people! I was the last person you should have told, as a matter of breeding, as a matter of tact, as a matter of the friendship you talk about.

MRS. LINDON. But that was just it!

WARDER. Do you dream what it would mean to me to shake even by a miserable tremor my confidence in my wife? But you haven't!

MRS. LINDON. I thought, and I still think, it's to your advantage to know.

WARDER. [*With a complete change of voice, from anger to the tone one adopts with a silly child.*] My dear Eve, while I don't for a minute excuse him, still I do now understand, perhaps, how even Fred Lindon must have found your ideas of devotion at times over the endurance line.

MRS. LINDON. You don't understand, — I

thought if you knew everything, together we could separate them — could arrange something.

WARDER. Eve! believe me, there's nobody to separate in this case; there's nothing, so far as I and mine are concerned, to arrange.

[*He goes again to the bell by the mantel.*

MRS. LINDON. Who are you going to ring for?

WARDER. You know.

MRS. LINDON. [*Stopping him quickly.*] Not before me! I don't want to see her humiliated. I don't want a public revenge or triumph; that's not the feeling I have.

WARDER. What in the world do you mean? [*He rings.*] Becky will deny the —

MRS. LINDON. [*Interrupting.*] Very likely! But these proofs are incombatible, and if that's her attitude, I shall go straight from your door to the divorce court.

[*She places the envelope of reports on the table with a blow.*

WARDER. [*Goes to her.*] You're mad! If your proofs are all right, then Becky'll not deny, she'll explain them. You forget you can only see everything red now, but I'm sane and quiet and sure [*Smiling.*], and I see things in their true colors. You must be guided by me in this. [*He takes her hand almost cruelly and speaks strongly, with the manner and voice of the man who is and means to remain master.*] Do you understand that? [*She draws her hand away as if in pain.*] I beg your pardon. I am afraid you are one of those dangerous "well-meaning" persons who do more harm than the people who are purposely malicious. You are to take no step without my sanction.

[BECKY *comes in with a certain air of bravado.*

BECKY. Excuse me, I heard the bell and I was waiting — am I right?

WARDER. [*Goes to her.*] Come right in, dear.

BECKY. Well! has Eve thrown a bomb, or a trump card? Am I to be taken into the secret or conspiracy or what?

WARDER. [*After a second's pause, in which he thinks how to begin.*] Eve has convinced herself, and would convince me, of some very — [*He thinks for the word.*] wrong — worse than wrong things, but I prefer to be convinced of the contrary by you. And I prefer to come to you with my confidence, my conviction complete. And together we'll try to keep Eve from harming others as well as herself and Lindon — the latter seems unavoidable. [EVE *pushes her papers on the desk pointedly nearer to him. He ignores them.*] Eve says you've not been seeing Lindon often, but every day.

BECKY. Do you want me to deny it?

WARDER. [*Indulgently.*] I want you to tell the truth.

BECKY. Of course the accusation and the idea behind it are absurd. [WARDER *turns and looks at* MRS. LINDON, *who meets his glance and then looks down at the evidence on the table, pushing the papers a little farther toward him. He does not follow her glance.* BECKY *half laughs.*] It's like a trial, isn't it? By what right does Eve —

MRS. LINDON. [*Interrupting.*] The supreme right of any married woman who cares for her husband. Shall I be more explicit?

BECKY. No, you needn't trouble! What next, Tom?

WARDER. Eve claims you had an engagement with Fred —

[*Hesitates, trying to remember the day.*

MRS. LINDON. [*Quickly.*] Day before yesterday.

WARDER. Which you broke off over the telephone.

BECKY. How does she know that? Does she tap our wire? Merciful Heavens, Eve, you've become so morbid over your trouble your mind's diseased on the subject of Fred — and everybody else apparently.

MRS. LINDON. Ha!

WARDER. But is this true, Becky?

BECKY. [*To gain time.*] Is what true?

WARDER. About this appointment with Fred which you broke over the —

BECKY. [*Interrupting.*] Of course not!

WARDER. [*Who begins to doubt her.*] If it were, you could easily explain it, I'm sure.

[*Hoping to suggest this course to her.*

BECKY. [*Her head lost.*] Of course — but there's nothing to explain! The whole thing's false! What do you take me for, Eve? If you think I'm a home destroyer, you've made a mistake in the bird! And what do you mean by coming into my precious home and trying to make trouble for me?

[*Sitting on the sofa, frightened and almost in tears.*

WARDER. Wait a minute, Becky, it's partly my fault.

BECKY. It is not! I know whose fault it is, and I must say that, at last, I don't blame Fred Lindon!

MRS. LINDON. Oh!

BECKY. There! I'm sorry I said that. When I'm excited like this I speak the truth straight out, no matter what happens!

WARDER. Well really it was I who insisted on your joining us, against Eve's will. [*To* MRS. LINDON.] Your way was best. It was my man's point of view — [*To* BECKY.] and you are right, under the circumstances, no doubt, to answer as you do.

BECKY. My dear Tom, there's no other way to answer.

WARDER. [*Looks at her, then takes up the envelope containing the detective reports and holds them tightly in his hand. He comes down to* MRS. LINDON.] If you will leave us alone, I will go over the whole matter with Becky, — by ourselves will be much better.

MRS. LINDON. I need hardly tell you those papers are most valuable to me.

BECKY. [*Looking up, her curiosity aroused.*] What papers?

[*Nobody answers her. She tries to see*

MRS. LINDON. Will you promise me not to let them out of your hands till you put them back into mine?

WARDER. I will.

MRS. LINDON. [*As she moves to go, stops.*] You will find the entries which are of particular interest to you marked on the margin with a red cross!

WARDER. [*Satirically.*] Thank you!

[BECKY *rises and rings for the* SERVANT. MRS. LINDON *goes out.*

BECKY. [*Coming to meet* WARDER.] I think I'm a pretty good-natured woman to let Eve —

WARDER. [*Stands before* BECKY *with his hands on her shoulders, making her look straight into his eyes.*] Now be careful, dearest. You've married a man who doesn't understand a suspicious nature

— who has every confidence in you and the deepest — a confidence that couldn't be easily disturbed; but once it was shaken, every unborn suspicion of all the past years would spring to life fullgrown and strong at their birth, and God knows if my confidence could ever come back. It never has in any of the smaller trials of it I've made in my life. So you'll be careful, won't you, dearest? I mean even in little things. My faith in you is what gives all the best light to my life, but it's a live wire — neither you nor I can afford to play with it.

[*Goes to the writing table and takes the papers out of* EVE'S *envelope.*

BECKY. Tom, you frighten me! Eve has made you jealous again. [*Goes to him and puts both arms about his neck.*] Now, my darling, I give you my word of honor I love only you and never

have loved Fred Lindon and never could! Say you believe me!

WARDER. Haven't I always believed you?

BECKY. Ye- - - -s.

WARDER. But if I find your word of honor is broken in one thing, how can I ever trust it in another?

BECKY. Of course you can't, — but you needn't worry, because it won't be broken.

WARDER. Then, now we're alone, tell me the truth, which you didn't tell me when you said you'd not seen Lindon often.

BECKY. [*Turns away.*] It was the truth. I haven't — so very often.

WARDER. Not every day?

BECKY. [*Sits in the chair by the writing-table.*] How could I?

WARDER. Nor telephoned him Thursday, break-

ing off an engagement *after you told me absolutely you'd parted with him for good — and had no appointment?*

BECKY. Of course not! The idea! [*But she shows she is a little worried.*] Eve Lindon never could tell the truth!

WARDER. The telephone girl must have lied too or else the statement was made out of whole cloth.

[*Throwing the envelope on the desk.*

BECKY. What statement?

WARDER. [*Sitting on sofa.*] From these detectives.

[*He begins to look through the papers.*

BECKY. Detectives! [*Stunned.*] What detectives?

[*Picks up envelope and looks at it, puts it back on desk.*

WARDER. Eve's, who have shadowed her husband for the past two months.

BECKY. [*Thoroughly alarmed.*] You don't mean —

WARDER. [*Interrupts, not hearing what* BECKY *says; his thoughts on the papers which he is reading, he speaks very quietly.*] These certainly do make out a case of daily meetings for you two.

BECKY. It's not true!

WARDER. Though not so very many *here.*

[*Turning over a fresh paper.*

BECKY. [*Rises, gets above desk.*] All! All the meetings there have been, — practically. This is simply awful! Eve is capable of making the most terrific scandal for nothing. Don't let her, Tom, will you? Tear those things up!

WARDER. [*Smiling indulgently, not taking her seriously.*] Becky!

BECKY. [*Leaning over the table, stretches out her hand toward him.*] Well, let me! Let me take them from you without your noticing till it's too late!

WARDER. [*Seriously.*] You're not serious?

BECKY. I am!

WARDER. You heard me give Eve my word?

BECKY. To a mad woman like that it doesn't count.

WARDER. I wonder just how much your word does count with you, Becky!

BECKY. [*With great and injured dignity.*] It counts everything!

WARDER. They seem to have hit on some very out-of-the-way places for your rendezvous. [*He smiles.*] Where is Huber's museum?

BECKY. Why, it's down on Fourteenth — [*She interrupts herself quickly.*] I don't know where it is!

[*She moves away to collect herself.*

WARDER. [*Still smiling.*] And why the Washington Heights Inn in February? Or the Eden Musée ever?

BECKY. Of course some one else has been mistaken for me.

WARDER. [*Looks up.*] Ah! yes, that's a very possible idea.

BECKY. [*Goes to the sofa and sits beside him.*] Tom, don't read any more of the horrid things! Listen to me, don't let Eve go on. She'll ruin everything if she does. He'll never forgive her, never take her back.

WARDER. [*Reading and smiling.*] I didn't know you skated!

BECKY. I always loved skating. I only gave it up because it bored you. But I didn't skate then!

WARDER. When?

BECKY. I — I don't — oh, whenever that beast says!

WARDER. St. Nicholas Rink, Friday, February eighteenth. [*He has noticed the slip she made, but hides the fact; he speaks as he goes on reading.*] Eve and her husband have had a big row, and he swears he'll never see her again, not even in the other place, that she's come between you and him and that he'll never forgive.

[*He finishes seriously, his bantering manner gone.*

BECKY. Oh, how untrue! I don't believe he said any such thing. Eve's jealous mind has distorted something else. The reason for our friendship — [*He rises with a half-angry movement, goes above the table looking for the envelope.*] such as it is — was to bring Eve and him together.

WARDER. From *your* point of view.

BECKY. No, believe me, he isn't as bad as you think.

WARDER. [*Showing the papers.*] And what about these? They agree with me.

BECKY. If you believe those papers about him, then you must believe them about me.

WARDER. [*Coming to her.*] Heaven forbid, Becky! They would prove you a liar and a terrible one — which you're *not, are you?*

BECKY. How can you ask?

WARDER. If these were true — if I thought you had deceived me to such an extent — I could never trust you again so long as I lived, Becky.

BECKY. Shall you speak to Mr. Lindon about them?

WARDER. No, I wouldn't insult you by discussing you with Lindon, unless I was convinced every word and more here was true. I will see

Eve to-morrow and perhaps get hold of these detectives myself.

BECKY. [*Almost trembling with dread.*] And now go and have your game. You need it! You're getting morbid. You'll be believing these beastly things if you don't get some exercise.

WARDER. What time is it?

BECKY. [*She looks at clock on the mantel, and speaks with her face still away from him.*] Three. When will you be back?

[*She conceals her anxiety to hear his answer.*

WARDER. Oh, six, I suppose.

BECKY. [*Facing him with a certain relief.*] Not till six — you're sure?

WARDER. Yes, you know your father's coming and there's no necessity of my seeing him.

BECKY. Oh! I forgot all about father's telegram! If it's money, I'm to be firm?

WARDER. Absolutely.

BECKY. [*Taking hold of the envelope which he has in his left hand away from her.*] What are you going to do with those?

WARDER. You heard me tell Eve they shouldn't go out of my hands except into hers.

[*He gently but firmly removes her hand from the envelope.*

BECKY. And you meant it?

WARDER. Don't you mean a promise you give like that?

BECKY. Yes, of course. . . .

WARDER. [*Taking out his keys.*] I'm going to put them away in my room. I want to have a thorough, careful look through them later. Of course I can't let it rest here. The detectives must learn their mistake at once.

BECKY. Yes, of course. But you are going to the Welds' now for your game?

WARDER. Yes, good-by.

[*Presses her hand. Gives her a tender but questioning look, but does not kiss her, and then goes out.*

BECKY. He's begun to distrust me already. Dear God in Heaven, if I ever get out of this, I'll never tell another lie so long as I live! [*She turns to the window. Smiles to* WARDER *outside and throws him a kiss, but afterward her face at once assumes its frightened look. Coming from the window, she sinks upon the piano stool.*] *He's* got to save me! Now he can prove that he is worthy a decent woman's friendship. [*She goes to the telephone and calls.*] Hello! Hello! [*She suddenly realizes.*] But I can't use the telephone! Central has told things already! [*She hangs up the receiver.*

The telephone bell rings.] I must write him. [*The bell rings again. She takes up the receiver and speaks angrily.*] Hello? . . . No, I didn't ring. You've made a mistake. [*Hangs up the receiver.*] You telltale toad you! [*She writes.*] "If this note reaches you in time, please come over"— I ought to be able to get rid of father in half an hour — [*She looks up at the clock.*] "at half-past three." [*Seals note and addresses it.*] "Important."

[*Which she underlines.*

SERVANT. [*Entering Left, announces.*] Mr. Roland.

[ROLAND *is an elderly, dried-up little man with an air of the dandy jockey still clinging to him underneath his gray hairs and dyed moustache. A vivid carnation is in his buttonhole and a somewhat rusty springiness in his gait.*

ROLAND. [*Coming in jauntily.*] Hello, Beck!

BECKY. [*With fictitious spirit.*] Father!

[*He starts to kiss her, forgetting the ever present cigarette in his mouth; then he stops to remove it, and does kiss her.*

ROLAND. How are you?

BECKY. I'm awfully glad to see you, but you can't stay long. Excuse me just a moment. Jenks, I want you to ring for a messenger and give him — [*Stops.*] no, when he comes, send him to me.

[*She has started to give* JENKS *the note, but changes her mind.* JENKS *bows and turns to leave.*

ROLAND. I say, Becky, might I have a glass of brandy? I took coffee after lunch on the train and it's poisoned me. Must have been canned coffee!

BECKY. Very well, Jenks.

[*The* SERVANT *goes out Left.*

ROLAND. [*Lolling on the sofa.*] What the devil did you mean by sending me fifty dollars instead of five hundred?

BECKY. [*Surprised.*] I read it fifty! I never dreamed you'd ask for five hundred more!

[*Going toward him.*

ROLAND. I wrote five hundred and I must have it!

BECKY. My dear father, it's impossible. I tried as it was to get a little more from Tom, but he said "no," to send you the fifty dollars, with his love, but not one penny more, and to make you understand — and, father, he means it — that for the future you must keep within your allowance.

[*The* SERVANT *enters with the brandy on a salver, and pours out a liqueur glass full.*

ROLAND. But *you'll* help me?

BECKY. [*Sitting on the opposite end of the sofa.*] No, he forbids it, and in the future I'm going to do what Tom wishes, and never deceive him even in a little thing again. [*To the* SERVANT *who hands the glass of brandy to* ROLAND.] The messenger boy hasn't come yet?

SERVANT. No, madam.

BECKY. If he doesn't come in five minutes, ring again.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*Starting to go,* ROLAND *stops him.*

ROLAND. Not so fast!

[*He points to the glass which he has emptied and the* SERVANT *pours out another glass.* ROLAND *takes it and puts it on the table behind him.*

The SERVANT *busies himself with gathering up the after-dinner coffee cups and trying to overhear all that he can.*

BECKY. How is Mrs. Crespigny?

ROLAND. That woman will be the death or the marriage of me!

BECKY. Don't be absurd, father! She's given you the most comfortable home you've had for years. In that letter she wrote me she said she'd been a real mother to you.

ROLAND. The *mother* is a blind, a false lead to hide her hand! her trumps are marriage.

BECKY. Nonsense! Mrs. Crespigny must realize the difference in your positions.

ROLAND. You haven't lived with her social souvenirs as I have for four years! [*The* SERVANT *starts to take up the glass which* ROLAND *has put aside, but the latter stops him. The* SERVANT *has*

delayed over his work as long as he dares in his desire to listen, and now goes out Left.] Becky, are you and Tom hungering for a mother-in-law?

BECKY. I don't know what you mean?

ROLAND. It's a question of five hundred dollars for me or a new Mrs. Roland!

BECKY. [*Astounded.*] You don't mean you owe Mrs. Crespigny that money?

ROLAND. Well, I've not paid my board bill as regularly as I might have wished.

BECKY. [*Rises, indignant.*] I'm ashamed of you!

ROLAND. I'm ashamed of myself, but shame won't pay bills; if it would, there'd have been many an unpaid debt washed off the slate in this world.

[*The* SERVANT *returns with a messenger boy.*

SERVANT. The messenger, madam.

[BECKY *goes to the boy. During* BECKY'S *talk with the messenger,* ROLAND *fills his pocket with cigars from the box on the table.*

BECKY. I want you to take this note to its address, but only leave it in case the gentleman is in. Do you understand?

MESSENGER. Yes, ma'am.

BECKY. And come back and tell me.

MESSENGER. Yes, ma'am.

[*He goes out with the* SERVANT, *who has waited for him.*

ROLAND. I confess, my child, I have flirted a little with the dame in question.

BECKY. Father!

ROLAND. I have, in a way, led her on!

BECKY. And you always told me my mother's memory was the one precious thing left, that you meant to keep always untouched by your life!

ROLAND. I don't deny, Becky, I'd be ashamed of it. I don't pretend Mrs. Crespigny would be a solace or a substitute; she would, at the best perhaps, be a resource, — but what she threatens to become unless I pay is a legal necessity!

BECKY. *Could* she do that?

ROLAND. I have been obliged at times by desperate need of ready money to suggest to her certain things as probabilities which were barely remote possibilities! And unfortunately — *unfortunately* — once or twice in writing.

BECKY. She has compromising letters of yours?

ROLAND. She has a large collection of illustrated postal cards from every place I've been since I've lodged with her, — they are her chief artistic dissipation — and a double set of Baltimore Duplicates, which I am afraid are the most foolish; as I am in the habit of making up with her in that

way after little tiffs when she takes the stand of not being on speaking terms with me.

BECKY. Father! You've been a terrible idiot.

ROLAND. I have, my dear!

BECKY. Can't you get those cards back?

ROLAND. The rent due is "Mother's" price for them. [*Rising.*] You will make Tom give it to me, won't you? and I'll promise not to make such a fool of myself again.

[*Sitting on the arm of the sofa, drawing* BECKY *toward him and putting both his arms about her.*

BECKY. Tom's idea now is that you deserve all you get. He'll say you deserve Mrs. Crespigny.

[*Leaving him, she goes above the table.*

ROLAND. Oh, come, she's not so bad as that!

BECKY. How old is she?

ROLAND. She has told me several ages. The general average would make her about forty-seven and a quarter.

BECKY. Pretty?

ROLAND. A fine figure of a woman and plays an A-one game of piquet.

BECKY. I see! When did her husband die?

ROLAND. He didn't die. He stole from the bank in which he was employed and went to jail, and she says for social reasons she was naturally obliged to take advantage of the divorce law. I have a suspicion myself he may have preferred jail!

BECKY. [*Comes quickly to him.*] Father, I would never forgive you if you did such a thing! It's degrading to me and to my mother's memory for you to accept any sort of indulgence at that woman's hands! When we get her paid, you must leave her house.

ROLAND That I can't and won't do, because I'm far too comfortable!

SERVANT. [*Entering Left, announces.*] Mrs. Crespigny!

ROLAND. [*Jumps up.*] Mrs. who?

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in flamboyantly. She is a woman past the age of uncertainty, dressed gaudily, with an hour-glass figure; she has innumerable bracelets and bangles, and an imitation jewelled chain flaunts a heavy pair of lorgnettes, like a gargoyle hanging over a much-curved bust. Enormous wax pearls in her ears are in direct contrast to the dark beginnings of her otherwise russet-gold hair. Neither her shoes nor her stays fit, and both are too tight. She is brightly rouged, and yet the very failure of the façade reveals, somehow,*

the honest interior of a human if forlornly foolish female.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Excuse me for intruding myself which I know is not social good form. Mis' Warder, I take it?

[BECKY *bows.*

ROLAND. [*Angrily.*] What do you mean by following me here?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*After severe look at him, turns back to* BECKY.] I want you to know the facts as between your father and me, and just how the matter is, and get your support that I done right! [*To* ROLAND.] I know your daughter is a lady if you ain't, and being a lady myself I have a certain pride. [*To* BECKY.] I've had a good deal of trouble persuading your father that though a lady sometimes takes in a paying guest she still holds her own in the social scale. I have friends of my

own in the New York Smart Set! My niece married a Mr. Gubenhamers and lives in a perfectly elegant house of her own on Lennox Avenue. Do you know her? One thousand two hundred and fifty-three?

BECKY. No.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, don't you? Well, of course I know New York is big. Still, perhaps you know her husband's cousin, who is also in a way a relation? You will know her by name — Mrs. Otto Gurtz, President of the West Side Ladies Saturday Afternoon Social Gathering?

BECKY. No, I'm afraid I don't know her.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Well! I guess you don't read the Harlem society notes in the papers; if you did, you'd know what she stands for socially.

BECKY. Suppose we keep to the reason of your visit — I understand my father owes you money —

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *turns sharply to* ROLAND.] and that you insist on being paid, which is natural —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. A trumped-up story! [*Going to* ROLAND.] I guess I done just about the right thing to chase on here after you! I'm sorry to say it, Mis' Warder, 'specially as it ain't exactly ladylike, but your father, with all his superfine qualities, is a liar! Yes, ma'am, between us two as ladies, he's an ornery liar!

[*Sinks into a chair in tears.* ROLAND *lights a cigarette angrily and goes up to the window.*

BECKY. Mrs. Crespigny, wouldn't it be better to behave more like a lady and talk less about one? Why break into the house of a woman you don't know and make a scene over a matter of rent due you —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. It ain't the rent! It's all a question of horses. When he left my house

this morning, he said he was leaving for good unless I let him have —

ROLAND. [*Interrupting her.*] Mrs. Crespigny! You're hysterical! You're saying things you'll regret —

SERVANT. [*Entering, Left.*] The messenger has come back, madam.

BECKY. Oh, I want to see that boy! Excuse me a minute.

[*She hurries out and the* SERVANT *follows her.*

ROLAND. I knew you were in the train; that's why I staid in the smoker. And it decided me to keep my word never to go back to your house!

[*He sits determinedly in the armchair at Left.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. And you told her I was dunning you for the rent!

ROLAND. She has no more sympathy with my

betting than you have! I wouldn't tell her the money was to put on Wet Blanket, Monday!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Rises and goes to him.*] *No*, you'd rather let her think I was a grasping harpy, when you know, if the truth's told, you owe me at least five times five hundred dollars with your borrowings and your losses at cards!

ROLAND. [*Smilingly.*] You haven't won lately.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Do you know why?

ROLAND. Oh, of course! You got out of the wrong side of the bed or you dreamed of a black horse!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Pathetically and a little ashamed.*] No. I've let you win a-purpose — because I was ashamed for you to owe me any more money. I'm trying to keep a little pride in you somehow, even if I have to cheat to do it.

[*She almost breaks down again, and turning*

away, takes a powder puff from a little gilt box and powders her nose to cover up the traces of tears.

ROLAND. Well, do you think it's pleasant for me to owe you money? A kind friend like you! [*Going to the mantel and flicking his cigarette ash in the fireplace.*] One reason I want to take advantage of this tip for Monday is to pay you if I win.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, and then go board somewhere else? Is that your idea? Or to stay here?

ROLAND. Well, my daughter and her husband want me. [*Leaning on the mantel.*] They say their home is my home.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going toward him, alarmed.*] But you won't stay, will you? I left word with Josephine to have your favorite meenoo cooked

for a late supper in case you'd come back. We'll have a game to-night. I'll play you a rubber for the five hundred — it's against my conscience to give it to you outright for horse-racing.

ROLAND. *Loan* it to me!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, of course! I always mean loan. Oh, the flat'd be just too dreadful lonesome without you! Say you'll come back! Quick, before Mis' Warder comes in! Won't you?

ROLAND. [*Coming toward her.*] Well, if you make it a personal favor to you in this way, I can't exactly refuse! And that ends the most serious quarrel we've had yet.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Embarrassedly.*] If we was man and wife, there wouldn't be any need of such quarrels. The money'd be yours then to do as you liked with.

ROLAND. Don't tempt me! You know you're a great deal too kind to me as it is and I'm no good to take as much advantage of you as I do.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, pshaw! Say! I wish you'd help me to get on the right side of your daughter. You're too delicate to say anything, but I always suspect it's her that stands between us.

BECKY. [*Coming back.*] I'm very sorry, but you must go at once. I have an important engagement here in a few minutes and must change my dress. I will promise you, Mrs. Crespigny —

ROLAND. [*Interrupts.*] I have made an arrangement with Mrs. Crespigny that is agreeable to her, without Tom's and your assistance —

BECKY. [*Alarmed.*] Father, not —

ROLAND. [*Shakes his head.*] It seems I exaggerated my indebtedness a little and Mrs. Cres-

pigny exaggerated her desire to be paid this month and —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, I was just mad clean through and would have said anything!

BECKY. Well, I'm glad it's settled, but it seems a pity you couldn't have accomplished it without the railway journey, especially as I must ask you to excuse me at once.

[*She guides* MRS. CRESPIGNY *toward the door Left, but* MRS. CRESPIGNY, *instead of going out, makes a circle around an armchair and settles herself in it.* BECKY *goes despairingly to* ROLAND.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, I don't regret the trip over, because I've been dying to meet you, Mis' Warder, ever since I had the pleasure of knowing your father in a taty taty sort of way. And we can catch the four-fifteen.

BECKY. Good! [*Crossing to her, and holding out her hand.*] I'm sorry I can't ask you to stay.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, I can come over nearly any day! I've got such a perfectly lovely servant girl now. I give her every night out and she works like a dog all day — and you can trust her with everything! Can't you, Mr. Roland?

ROLAND. You can trust her with me all right.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *laughs loudly.*

BECKY. Father!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Ain't he killing! Do you inherit his sense of humor? He can get anything he wants out of me with just one of them wittycisms. [ROLAND *winks aside to* BECKY.] Of course, I won't say that he ain't an expensive boarder — [BECKY *sinks in the chair near Centre, discouraged.*] — but I consider he cuts both ways and at the finish the ends meets.

BECKY. I think I gather what you mean. I'm afraid you'll lose your train!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I mean it's hard for a lady what's got it in her blood, to take boarders, because usually the boarders is beneath what the lady's been accustomed to and she don't feel at home with 'em. Now with your father it's different, because he's a Roland and I'm a Crespigny.

BECKY. Oh, is that your own name? I thought —

ROLAND. [*Interrupting.*] No, Mrs. Crespigny's maiden name was Ruggles.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes, mamma made what we'd call a messyliance, married beneath her, you know. But she never descended, nor allowed us to neither, to papa's social level. Mamma was a O'Roorke. You know, one of them early

high-toned families that came over from Amsterdam in the *Mayflower.*

BECKY. I see!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Mamma often said to me, says she, "Jennie" —

BECKY. [*With her patience exhausted, jumps up, interrupting her.*] I must say good-by now — I've no time to dress.

[*She hurries out Right.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Rising.*] Well, do you think I made any sort of a hit with her?

ROLAND. My dear friend, I've told you before, you're not quite my daughter's style.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. But why not? She seems real refined.

[ROLAND *groans.* WARDER *comes in Left. He does not see* MRS. CRESPIGNY *on his entrance.*

WARDER. Hello, father! I didn't think I was

going to have this pleasure. I had an engagement to play racquets with Billy Weld, but he broke down in his motor somewhere between Tuxedo and here and I couldn't wait.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes a few steps and beckons to* ROLAND *to introduce* WARDER.

ROLAND. Mrs. Crespigny, Mr. Warder.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Bows.*] Pleased to make your acquaintance.

[*She turns away with a rather grand manner.* WARDER *looks from her to* ROLAND *and shakes his head, then goes to the writing-table with some letters he has brought in from the hall.*

ROLAND. Excuse me one moment. [*Beckons to* MRS. CRESPIGNY *and whispers to her aside.*] Wait for me!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. In the hall?

ROLAND. Lord, no! At the station!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh! [*Going, she turns at door to bid* WARDER *good-by.*] If you should ever be coming over to Baltimore, Mr. Warder, why just drop in!

[*She goes out Left.*

WARDER Where's Becky?

ROLAND. [*Going to him.*] She's upstairs. I just wanted to thank you for the money you sent me day before yesterday.

WARDER. What money?

ROLAND. The check for fifty dollars Becky mailed me.

WARDER. [*Starts, but controls it immediately.*] Oh, a check for fifty dollars —

ROLAND. The joke on me is that what I wanted was five hundred!

[*Digs* TOM *in ribs.*

WARDER. [*Looking off where* BECKY *went, absorbed in his thoughts.*] Oh, five hundred!

ROLAND. Yes, just five hundred. [*He looks at* WARDER, *and waits; hums a song and dances a few steps.*] Nothing doing, I suppose?

WARDER. No. Father, the fact is —

ROLAND. Yes, I know, Becky told me. Excuse me, I've got to catch a train. Good-by, my boy.

WARDER. [*With his thoughts elsewhere.*] Good-by!

[ROLAND *goes out whistling "Waiting at the Church."* WARDER *stands a moment thinking, then takes out his key chain.*

SERVANT. [*Entering, shows in* LINDON.] Mr. Lindon to see Mrs. Warder, sir.

[WARDER *looks up with a start, which he immediately controls, and disguises completely his thoughts and emotions.*

LINDON. How are you, Warder?

WARDER. [*Speaks very casually and pleasantly, with complete self-control*] Good afternoon, Lindon. [*Sees* SERVANT *about to go to* BECKY, *stops him.*] Jenks! [JENKS *goes to him.* WARDER *gives him a key from his chain.*] Go to my room and get me a large blue envelope from the upper right-hand drawer of the desk.

JENKS. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out Left.*]

WARDER. Excuse me, Mrs. Warder is out. She'll be sorry.

LINDON. [*Surprised.*] Out?

WARDER. Yes.

LINDON. But surely there must be some mistake?

WARDER. No, I'm sorry. I assure you she's out.

LINDON. Oh! Then do you mind if I wait?

WARDER. Is that scarcely worth while? I must be off at once, and I imagine Mrs. Warder is out for her usual bridge afternoon.

LINDON. I think, on the contrary, she must be surely coming back, and if you don't mind, I'll wait.

WARDER. [*With an apparently good-natured laugh.*] I don't like to insist against your apparently superior knowledge —

LINDON. [*Also smiling.*] No, no, it's only a note I received a few moments ago at the club. Here it is. [*Takes it from his pocket.*] That she must see me this afternoon. You know your wife is kindly acting as intermediary between Eve and myself. It is in regard to that. [*He hands the note to* WARDER, *who glances at it and returns it without reading.*] As it only came half an hour ago, I feel sure Mrs. Warder must expect to return soon.

SERVANT. [*Entering with an envelope, which he gives to* WARDER.] That is all I can find, sir.

WARDER. [*Humorously.*] That's all I want, so it's all right. Jenks, am I wrong in understanding that Mrs. Warder is out?

SERVANT. Yes, sir. Mrs. Warder is in, sir.

WARDER. Oh! I beg your pardon, Lindon.

LINDON. That's all right.

WARDER. [*To* JENKS.] Jenks, say to Mrs. Warder, Mr. Lindon is here. You needn't say anything about me. I'm off.

SERVANT. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out Right.*

LINDON. I'm not driving you away, I hope.

WARDER. Oh, no, I have some important papers to go over. Make yourself comfortable. Good-by.

LINDON. Thanks, old man. Good-by.

[*He sits on the sofa, as* WARDER *goes out Left.*

LINDON. Well! She did send for you, Freddy, old son! Now's your chance!

SERVANT. [*Reëntering.*] Mrs. Warder will be down at once.

LINDON. Thank you. [*The* SERVANT *goes out Left.* LINDON *goes to the piano and sings a verse of a song, "Everything comes to him who waits," etc. An idea comes to him. He weighs it, accepts it, smiles, and stops playing.*] I will! By George, I will!

[*He rises.*

[BECKY *hurries in from the Right and goes quickly toward him, crying, "Fred!" in a tone of distress and excitement. She leaves the door open behind her.* LINDON, *before she realizes what he is doing, has met her, taken her in his arms, and kissed her. She forces*

herself away from him, standing for a moment speechless with rage and astonishment.

LINDON. I told you, didn't I, Becky?

[*Tries to embrace her again.*

BECKY. [*Slowly and deliberately.*] That's just exactly what Tom said you'd do!

LINDON. *What!*

BECKY. Ten to one, he said, if I sent for you again, you'd kiss me.

LINDON. [*In alarm and astonishment.*] Yes, but what —

BECKY. But I wouldn't believe him! I said, and I believed, he did you an injustice.

LINDON. So you talked me all over with him, did you! Then why did you send for me to-day?

BECKY. Because I was a fool, if you want the true treason!

LINDON. My dear Becky —

BECKY. Oh, you'll hear more and worse than that if you stay to listen! I advise you to go! You can't help me. I don't trust you. You might even make matters worse. It may have been all done purposely as it is.

LINDON. Oh!

BECKY. You see I'm ready to believe all I've heard of you, now that you've shown your true silly self to me in that one sickening moment, and I'd rather not be saved at all than be saved by you!

[*She leans for a second against the corner of the writing-table.*

LINDON. How saved? From what?

BECKY. Never mind! I only want to say one more thing to you and then go, please. But I want this to ring in your ears so long as you remember me! There is only one man in this world

I love, and that's Tom, and there's only one man I despise and that's you! Lindon, Fred Lindon! You know who I mean! I know now what our friendship meant to you and I wish I could cut out of my life every second of every hour I've spent with you! I've been a fool woman, and you've been a cad, — but thank God, there are men in the world — real men — and one is my husband. Now go, please! Eve's a fool not to jump at the chance of getting rid of you and I shall tell her so.

[*She turns away from him with a movement of dismissal.*

LINDON. [*Going toward her.*] Do! For that, at least, I shall thank you, as well as for our delightful friendship, which I am sorry to have end so contrary to my expectations.

BECKY. [*With her eyes down, speaks in a low,*

shamed voice.] This room is too small for you and me at this moment, — which leaves?

[*He smiles, hesitates a moment, then sits in the armchair at Left.* BECKY *gives a half-smothered exclamation of rage and starts to leave the room.* LINDON *rises quickly.*

LINDON. No, no, I was only joking! I'm sorry you take the whole affair so seriously. Allow me.

[*He bows and goes out Left.*

BECKY. [*Stands quietly thinking a moment, then makes up her mind.*] Eve herself is the one to help me! But I can't go to her till I'm sure she'll listen and understand — Laura! [*She sits by the table and takes up the receiver of the telephone.*] Seven eight Plaza. Yes! It's a lady this time, so I hope you won't have to listen! Hello! Is Miss — Oh, is that you, Laura? Can you come over at once? I am in dreadful trouble! Oh,

well, after dinner, then! No, I was going out, but I won't — it's too important. You were right — and Eve's right too. Never mind, I can't tell you over the 'phone. I'll explain everything to-night, only don't fail me. You can prevent a real catastrophe that has no need to happen. — Oh, that's all right, don't stop another minute, then. Thank you with all my heart. [*She hangs up the receiver, gives a long sigh, and sits worriedly thinking.* WARDER *comes in, serious but calm. Looking at him, half frightened, she makes a great effort to be natural, and to be in a good humor.*] Hello, Tom! Your game finished already?

WARDER. We didn't play. Weld didn't get back to town. Any callers?

BECKY. No.

WARDER. I thought I saw some one leaving — from the top of the street.

BECKY. Did you? Oh! it was probably father; he came.

WARDER. No I spoke with your father some fifteen minutes ago. He told me about the money you gave him.

[*A second's pause;* BECKY *looks down and then up at him.*

BECKY. Are you angry?

WARDER. You gave me your word you wouldn't.

BECKY. But I was so sorry for him — that's why he came to-day, he said he must have it; I couldn't refuse him and you weren't here!

WARDER. He said you mailed him my check day before yesterday.

[BECKY *is silent, trapped, frightened. A pause, then she speaks in a low voice.*

BECKY. I'm so sorry —

[*A second's pause.*

WARDER. It looked to me like Fred Lindon.

[BECKY, *more frightened, realizing what is hanging over her, like a drowning person who cannot swim, flounders helplessly about in the next few speeches, trying to save herself by any and every means that she thinks may help her for the moment.*

BECKY. Well, I'll be honest, it *was* Fred Lindon!

WARDER. [*Anger getting the best of him.*] After everything — your word of honor, Eve's accusations, my absolute desire — you sent for him to come and see you!

BECKY. No, no, you mustn't think that, Tom! He came of his own accord of course, — I suppose to see if I would see him! I didn't know it!

WARDER. [*Wary, suspicious, to lead her on.*] Then why did you see him? You could easily excuse yourself.

BECKY. No, you don't understand. [*She flounders hopelessly.*] I didn't know it was he! Don't you see?

WARDER. No, I don't see!

[*Watches her with a face growing harder and harder with each lie she tells.*

BECKY. But I'm telling you — it was just like this; I was upstairs and Jenks came — and said a gentleman wanted to see me in the drawing-room. Just that, don't you see — a gentleman. [*She sees the doubting look in his face and mistaking it, tries to make her story more plausible.*] I was surprised too, and said "Who?" and Jenks said the gentleman gave no name — [*He turns sharply away from her, unable to face her as she tells the lies.*] Yes, I know it was funny — I thought so then. I suppose Jenks considered it a joke, — and I suppose he didn't give his

name for that very reason, for fear I wouldn't see him — [WARDER, *looking up as if to stop her, sees the door Right open and quickly closes it*] Of course the moment I came into the room and saw who it was, I excused myself, and he left.

WARDER. [*In a voice not loud but full of anger and emotion.*] Lies! all of it! Every word a lie, and another and another and another!

BECKY. [*Breathless with fright, gasping.*] Tom!

WARDER. [*Going to her.*] You sent for him! [*She is too frightened to speak, but she shakes her head in a last desperate effort at denial.*] Don't shake your head! I know what I'm talking about and for the first time with you, I believe! [*She puts up her hands helplessly and backs away from him.*] I saw your note to him! [*She starts with a sense of anger added to her other emotions.*] I

read it here, in this room; he gave it to me before you came down.

BECKY. The beast!

WARDER. [*With biting satire.*] *You're* going to misjudge him too!

BECKY. No, Tom, I'll tell you the truth and all of it!

WARDER. Naturally, now you've *got to!*

BECKY. No — wait! I did send for him — it was to tell him about those papers of Eve's.

WARDER. Yes, you must plan your escape together!

BECKY. No! because I still believed he was decent. I thought it was his duty, that he would claim it as his right, to prevent such a scandal as Eve threatened to make, which he knew I didn't deserve.

WARDER. Hah!

BECKY. You may sneer, but I don't! Yes, I broke my promise to you — what else could I do? You wouldn't let me send for him! And he came! And he did what you said he would. He took me in his arms before I could stop him, and kissed me.

[*She bends over the back of the chair at Centre on which she is leaning, and sobs.*

WARDER. [*Goes to her, speaking with bitter irony*] Charming! And you turned on him, of course! Played the shocked and surprised wife and ordered him out of the house!

BECKY. Yes. But I did! Why do you speak as if I didn't?

WARDER. Do you expect me to believe this, too?

BECKY. [*Facing him.*] I don't expect, you've got to!

WARDER. Do you think you can go on telling

lies forever and I'll go on blindly believing them as I have for three years?

BECKY. Even you couldn't have turned on him with more anger and disgust than I did!

WARDER. I couldn't believe you if I wanted to! You've destroyed every breath of confidence in me!

BECKY. It's the truth I'm telling you now!

WARDER. In everything — everything that has come up since my eyes were first forced half open — you have told me a lie!

BECKY. It's the truth! It's the truth!

WARDER. [*Continues, hardly hearing her.*] The money to your father, the first lie, and to-day made a double one! All this rotten evidence of Eve's — another dozen! Your promise that Lindon's visit Thursday should be his last, the next!

BECKY. I meant it then — I meant it truthfully

WARDER. [*Ignoring her interruption.*] His visit after all to-day — that led of course to a mass of lies! And then the truth! He kissed you! And then another lie and another dozen to try and save yourself!

BECKY. [*Quietly, in a hushed, frightened voice.*] By everything in this world and in the next that I hold dear and reverence, I've told you the truth at last.

WARDER. You don't know what's true when you hear it or when you speak it! I could never believe in you again! Never have confidence! How could I? Ask any man in the world, and his answer would be the same!

[*He turns and goes away from her, to control his anger, which threatens to get the best of him.*

BECKY. [*Sobbing.*] No, no, Tom! Don't!

don't say that! You must believe in me! You must believe in me!

WARDER. [*After a pause, collects himself and comes to the writing-table.*] Becky, you and I must say good-by to each other. We must finish separately. [*A silence. She looks at him in dumb horror and surprise.*] Do you understand?

BECKY. [*In a low voice.*] No!

WARDER. We must separate. Quietly — no fuss, no divorce unless you wish it. [*A pause, she does not answer. He goes toward her and repeats.*] No divorce unless you wish it.

BECKY. [*With simple but deep pathos.*] I love you.

WARDER. You must stay on in the house for the present, till you can make your plans. That will help keep the thing quiet, too.

BECKY. Tom! Do you really mean all you're saying? Do you realize what it must mean for me — for both of us?

WARDER. Yes.

BECKY. To-morrow, perhaps — ?

WARDER. No. I shall go to Boston to-night for a few days; when I come back, you may have settled on something. If you haven't, I can manage all right. I don't want to press you about that, only —

BECKY. I will not stay in your house one single day without you.

WARDER. You'll have to! My price for hushing up Lindon and Eve, and every one else, is that you on your side act with dignity, and as I think wisest.

BECKY. [*Going to the armchair at Left.*] No! A woman like me whose heart is breaking, whether

she's right or wrong, can't act like that. *She can't do it!*

[*She sinks into the chair, bursting into tears.*

WARDER. [*Beside her.*] Try. For your sake as well as mine. Good-by, Becky.

BECKY. [*With the tears choking her voice.*] I told you the truth the last time. Oh, can't you believe me?

WARDER. No — good-by.

[*Going.*

BECKY. I love you and only you and you always —

WARDER. [*Turns in the doorway.*] The club address will reach me!

[*He goes out, closing the door behind him.* BECKY *sits still a moment thinking; then she goes to the writing-table, rings the bell, and takes up a time-table. Her hands drop upon the*

table in utter dejection and her head lowers as the tears come again fast and thick.

SERVANT. [*Entering Left.*] Yes, madam?

BECKY. [*Controlling her emotion and hiding as best she can the traces of it.*] Tell Perkins to pack my small trunk and hand-bag. I am going to Baltimore to spend a day or so with my father.

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

BECKY. And then come back, please.

SERVANT. Very good, madam.

[*Goes out.*

BECKY. [*Takes up the telephone.*] Hello! 708 Plaza. [*As she listens for the answer she looks about the room, the control goes from her face, and the tears come once more; she brushes them away and tries to speak in a conventional tone without displaying her emotion, which is however plainly evident.*] Hello, I want Miss Fraser, please. . . .

Oh, ask her to call me the minute she's free, please. Mrs. Warder. [*She hangs up the receiver and writes.*] "I am leaving now. You will at least believe that I cannot turn you out of your house, nor can I live in it one single day without you. It is ready waiting for you as I shall be all the rest of my life if you can ever again believe —"

[*She stops as the* SERVANT *enters and comes to her.*

SERVANT. Madam?

[BECKY *finishes writing silently.*

BECKY. [*Sealing the note.*] Has Mr. Warder gone yet?

SERVANT. Only just this second went out, madam. He told me to pack his bag and meet him at the station with it.

BECKY. [*Rising.*] Give this to Mr. Warder with his things

[*Gives the note.*

SERVANT. Yes, madam.

[*He goes out Left. The telephone bell rings.*

BECKY. [*Going to the table, sits, and takes up the receiver. Again she does her best to keep the emotion out of her voice, but only partly succeeds.*] Hello! Laura? I'm so sorry, after all, I can't see you to-night. Tom has been called to — Chicago suddenly on business — yes, isn't it too bad? And I've had a telegram that father isn't very well, so I am taking the five-twenty train to Baltimore. Yes, I'll write. No, I don't think he's seriously ill. Good-by!

[*She hangs up the receiver, dropping her head on the table and sobbing heart-brokenly as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

MR. ROLAND'S *rooms in* MRS. CRESPIGNY'S *flat in Baltimore. This is the parlor of a cheap flat, with the bedroom, through an arch, originally intended for the dining room and lit by a narrow window on a well. There is red paper on the walls and red globes for the electric lights. An ugly set of furniture, with many tidies, a strange conglomeration of cheap feminine "nick-nacks," relieved by a sporting print or two, a frame of prize ribbons, and a few other masculine belongings which have been added to the original condition of the room, like a thin coat of paint. At back is a bow-window beside a sofa. On the Left*

is the opening into the bedroom, and beside this a door leads to the hall. There is a centre-table with chairs on either side and a Morris chair down on the Right. A sideboard in the upper Left corner.

ROLAND *and* MRS. CRESPIGNY *are playing piquet at the centre-table. A "Teddy Bear" with a pink ribbon bow about its neck is sitting on the table near* MRS. CRESPIGNY. *They play on through part of the scene.* ROLAND *stops to light a cigarette, and* MRS. CRESPIGNY *takes advantage of the pause to powder her face and preen herself in a pocket mirror.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You don't think you smoke too many of them?

ROLAND. If my smoking is disagreeable to you, I might spend my evenings at the club.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You know different! You

can't make that an excuse for skinning out of spending your evenings at home. I only wish't I smoked 'em myself. I've read in the papers that real ladies do now — but I guess it's the fast set, and I always was conservative.

ROLAND. [*Playing.*] Don't talk; study your cards. If you don't take care, you'll win!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Will I? Excuse me, I wasn't thinking. [*She plays a card, and as* ROLAND *takes the trick she takes up her mirror and examines wrinkles.*] I believe I'll have massage. I heard of a fine massoor yesterday.

ROLAND. Masseuse, you mean, I hope.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Massoor! Massoose is plural. The singular is massoor. You forget I was educated in New Orleans.

[*She rises and goes to the sideboard and pours out a brandy and soda.*

ROLAND. Where's my brandy and soda?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I'm getting it.

[*Bringing the glass down to the table.*

ROLAND. That's a good girl. Thank you, Mrs. Crespigny.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Ain't it funny, good friends as we've been for so long now, we've kep' on calling each other "Mr." and "Mrs."? S'pose it wouldn't be etiquay to call each other by our first names.

ROLAND. Etiquette.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. *Etiquay!* You can correct my English when you want to, but my French I've kep' pure since school, and I remember perfeckly — all words ending in e-t you pernounce A.

ROLAND. What is your first name?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Genevieve, but I was always

called Jenny by my first h — ! I mean — I was always called Jenny by my schoolgirl friends.

ROLAND. [*Playing.*] Very interesting.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Playing.*] I think your first name's real pretty!

ROLAND. [*Taking the trick.*] Tut, tut! You're getting too skittish, Mrs. Crespigny.

[*She laughs a little embarrassedly.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. It's your fault!

ROLAND. [*Playing card, and laughing.*] Then I apologize!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Playing card, and giggling.*] Oh, you needn't!

ROLAND. [*Laughing more at her than with her, but realizing that she will not know the difference.*] I insist.

[*He takes the trick.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Anybody'd think we was

engaged to be married or something of that sort, wouldn't they?

ROLAND. I hope not!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, I don't know! I remember some postal cards what I've read that might be construed to lean that way. [ROLAND *rises and gets a cigarette from the box on the table in the bow-window.*] There was one from Atlantic City that was just too sweet for anything! You sent it after we had that ridickerlous quarrel on the board walk.

ROLAND. What about?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I lost my self-respect and asked you to kiss me, 'cause you said you was grateful for the fifty dollars I gave you for your poker losses the night before. And you handed me back my money and said if that was the price of the loan — oh, how you hurt my feelings!

[*With a touch of futile emotion.*

ROLAND. [*Coming back to his chair.*] That was only a bluff! Come along, I'll play you a game for the whole bunch of postal cards.

[*Takes up the second deck and shuffles.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Rising, speaks rather grandly.*] Nobody won't never get them postal cards from me except over my dead body. [*Cuts the cards, and* ROLAND *deals.*] And I intend to refer to 'em every chance I get in hopes that some day — just in a desperate fit, maybe — you'll up and marry me to stop me.

[*Sits again.*

ROLAND. Go on, play.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You've owned up you're comfortable in my cute little flat — and I don't nag.

[*Both take up their hands, both play, and she takes trick.*

ROLAND. You haven't the right, but as my wife — nay, nay, Pauline.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You've got the best rooms here, and if you ever do pay any board, don't I lend it right back to you the next day?

ROLAND. Isn't it a little indelicate to remind me of that, Mrs. Crespigny?

[*Playing.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Getting a little angry.*] Well, I guess the indelicacy's even! [*She plays and starts to take the trick. He stops her and takes it himself.*] Oh, excuse me, I'm at your beck and nod, and I've even so far forgot my family pride as to hint that you wasn't unacceptable to me in a nearer relation.

ROLAND. There you go again! Keep off the thin ice!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Throws down her cards and*

loses her temper outright.] Well, why won't you marry me? I may have forgot my pride, but I never forget myself. You know you wouldn't dare step over the invisible line between the dumb-waiter and the bath-room, what separates your apartment from mine in the flat.

ROLAND. One moment, please. Have I ever even hinted at taking the slightest advantage of your unprotected position in this house? [*He rises in mock dignity.*] Who's kept further from that invisible line, you or I?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Well, I must say you've always behaved toward me like a perfect gentleman. [*He sits again and takes another cigarette.*] But jes' let's speak the truth — if you can about anything! [*He fumbles in his vest pockets.*] Matches? [*She rises, goes to the sideboard, and finding a box of matches, brings it back to the table.*

During the first part of the following speech she makes nervous and ineffectual efforts to strike matches, in each case breaking off the heads without any result.] You know you ain't wanted at your clubs; that's why you first took to playin' evenings with me — that, and 'cause I was easy! You know that here in Baltimore you're called a tout, a broken-down gambler, and a has-been, but I've always hoped you was a will-be for me. [*Irritated by her repeated failures, he takes the matchbox from her and lights his cigarette with the first match he strikes.*] You know your old friends'd rather go 'round the block than stop and talk to you in the street. Yes, you know it as well as I do! And you've lived off me, borrowed money of me, led me to caring for you, let me take care of you as if you was — my own child, and I've saved you from bein' a drunken sot! [*Her voice*

fills with tears, but her anger gets the best of her, and she finishes strongly, striking the table with her beringed hand as she leans across toward him.] Now, why ain't I good enough for you?

ROLAND. [*Rising, really angry, and his dignity offended.*] Mrs. Crespigny —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Oh, you needn't get on your high horse or I'll win this rubber for the five hundred! I know you're worthless, and I know you don't always tell the truth, but through it all you've been a real gentleman to me, and I realized yesterday, when I thought you was gone for good, what it meant to me. I'm a decent woman, Mr. Roland, if I am a fool, and I swear I'm good enough for you!

ROLAND. So far as that goes, you're too good for me, but I've got others to consider. My daughter —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Interrupting him.*] Yes, I know she's against me. [*She sits again, and with determination.*] Well, I'm against her, and perhaps some day I'll have a chance to pay her back!

ROLAND. That's talking foolishly! In the first place, my allowance would stop the day I married.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Well, haven't I got enough for two? It's looked mighty like it the last couple a years.

[*She nervously takes the "Teddy Bear" from the table to hide her embarrassment at her boldness, and laying it flat on her knee, face downward, reties the pink bow on its neck.*

ROLAND. [*Sitting, he gathers the cards together and shuffles them.*] Come, come, here we are again on one of those useless discussions. Come along, give me another brandy and soda.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Resignedly.*] All right.

[*Rises, and takes his glass, replacing the "Teddy Bear" on the table.*] This will be your second before twelve o'clock and it's got to be a little weakish. [*She goes to the sideboard. The front door-bell is heard ring.*] My goodness! who can that be?

[*The bell rings again.*

ROLAND. Don't know, old girl, but go on, I'll deal for you.

[*He deals.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going to the table, cuts the cards.*] I just love to have you call me "old girl" — it seems so nice and familiar.

[*The bell rings again, and* MRS. CRESPIGNY, *taking the "Teddy Bear" with her, places it on the side table at Left and goes out.* ROLAND *deals. After a moment's pause* BECKY *comes in, carrying a hand-bag. She enters with an air of bravado, which fades instantly*

that she observes ROLAND *does not see her. But her pathetic, timid look vanishes immediately when he looks up.*

ROLAND. [*Going on dealing, without looking up.*] Who was it?

BECKY. [*With forced gayety.*] Hello, father!

ROLAND. Good Heavens!

BECKY. [*Putting her bag on the table at Left.*] Aren't you surprised?

ROLAND. [*Dryly.*] Very.

BECKY. And pleased?

ROLAND. Where in the world did you come from?

BECKY. New York; the next train after you. Give me a kiss. How are you?

[*Kisses him.*

ROLAND. What have you come for? Where are you stopping?

BECKY. Here!

ROLAND. At what hotel?

BECKY. No hotel — here with you!

ROLAND. Nonsense! There's no place for you in the flat.

BECKY. Why not? I gave my check to the expressman and my trunk will be around in the morning.

ROLAND. These two rooms are all I have. [*Showing the opening to the Left.*] Take a look at the bedroom — a beastly, dark little hole with one window that doesn't look out, — it looks in! The bedroom of the flat we use for a dining room. Mrs. Crespigny sleeps in the servant's room — so she tells me.

BECKY. Father!

ROLAND. Now you can see what nice sort of

surroundings your poor old father's had to put up with these last years.

BECKY. [*Takes off her hat and cloak and puts them on sofa at Right.*] You have only yourself to blame! You could live splendidly on the allowance Tom makes you in the one club you've got left.

ROLAND. You needn't take off your things, you can't stay here.

BECKY. Oh, can't I? I've come to pay you a little visit, and here I stay to-night and several nights.

[*Comes to the centre-table and starts to collect cards.*

ROLAND. Be careful! That's Genevieve's hand and we must finish this sometime — I'm well ahead. [*Carefully places the cards, properly divided, on the table at Left.*] And really, Becky,

you can't stay here. You can go to a hotel if you want to, or back to New York. You're in the way here! I'm an old man; this sort of thing upsets me! There's no room and there's no bed for you. [*Crosses to the Morris chair and sits.*] What the devil do you mean, turning up here well toward midnight, and threatening to stay, when for years I've been trying to get you to come to Baltimore, and you know you were ashamed to come?

BECKY. [*Sitting in the chair Left of the centre-table.*] That isn't true, father; I always said I'd come if you'd give up certain things.

ROLAND. Well, I haven't given them up, so why have you come? What's the joke? And where's Tom?

BECKY. [*After a second's pause.*] That's just it. Tom has been called to — San Francisco —

suddenly — just after you left, on business — and the idea came to me, at last I'll make that visit to father! It'll be a good chance for me to settle Mrs. Crespigny, too!

ROLAND. You couldn't have come at a more inopportune time! I was very busy this evening.

BECKY. Yes, I know, — piquet with Mrs. C.! I'll finish it with you.

[*Rises and goes to get the cards.*

ROLAND. No, you won't! You'll go to a hotel for the night and I'll come and have a decent lunch with you to-morrow.

BECKY. I can't go to a hotel. I've come away without a penny. I had to borrow half the money for my ticket from Perkins.

ROLAND. Where is Perkins?

BECKY. In New York. I knew, of course, there'd be no place for her here.

ROLAND. Any of the hotel people here will trust you.

BECKY. I won't ask them. I forgot to get Tom's address, so I can't send to him for any money. I've got to stay with you, father.

[*She sits on the arm of the Morris chair and puts her arm about her father.*

ROLAND. You're a very boring person!

BECKY. That's a kind welcome for a dear and only daughter!

ROLAND. And I'm not going to have myself made uncomfortable by you!

BECKY. Please let me stay for a day or two, maybe a little longer or maybe not so long. I'll promise not to be any trouble; I'll sleep on the sofa!

ROLAND. Humph! You don't know that sofa! That was made in the antebellum and the ante-

springum days! Even a cat couldn't sleep on it without chloroform.

BECKY. Well, I don't expect to sleep, father, and if I don't, you won't know it. I've *got* to stay.

[*Rises and goes away and stands by the table with her back toward him.*

ROLAND. [*Looks at her, suddenly suspicious.*] Becky, you're not telling me the truth. Something's the matter.

BECKY. [*Turning toward him, taking a high moral stand.*] Really, father!

ROLAND. There's something wrong. What is it?

BECKY. Nothing.

ROLAND. Oh, come, I'm your father, and I know the look in your eyes when you're not telling the truth; you get that look from me! You're

telling me a lie — tell me the truth. What does it mean?

BECKY. [*After a second's pause, bursts out with all her pent-up feelings, which she has been trying to hide.*] I've left Tom.

ROLAND. How do you mean — "Left Tom"?

BECKY. Left him for good. I'll never live with him again.

ROLAND. Nonsense!

BECKY. Never! You don't understand.

[*She sits again beside the table, leaning her elbows upon it and resting her face between her two hands.*

ROLAND. No, I don't! and I don't want to!

BECKY. I've left his house in New York for good.

ROLAND. What's your reason? What's he done?

BECKY. He's deceived me.

ROLAND. [*Rising.*] Tom! Never!

BECKY. Father, I can't go back to him; I can't! Don't ask me any more questions, only keep me with you — please, keep me with you. . . .

ROLAND. [*Going to her.*] You're upset about matters. You've had a quarrel, that's all, and you're going back to-night.

BECKY. No. I've told him I'll never come back and I've come to stay — with you.

ROLAND. But I won't have it! In the first place, Mrs. Crespigny wouldn't have it either. She'd be jealous of your being here — and after all it's her flat. And I don't believe what you tell me about Tom.

BECKY. We can go somewhere else. Who is Mrs. Crespigny? [*Rises, and going to him takes hold of his sleeve.*] And I'm your daughter.

Besides, Tom's allowance will stop. From now on you and I must get on together with the little money I have from mother.

ROLAND. Nothing of the sort. Even if you did leave Tom, you can make him take care of you.

BECKY. I won't take any money from Tom! No more money! Do you hear me, father?

ROLAND. [*Becoming more angry.*] No, I don't hear you! And I have something to say about my end of all this, which is that you've got to go back to your husband before it's too late for him to take you back, and give him a chance to explain! You'll go back to Tom to-night!

[*He goes determinedly to the sofa and gets her hat and cloak for her.*

BECKY. [*Takes her hat from him and puts it*

on the centre-table with equal determination.] I shall sleep here, in this room, to-night!

ROLAND. You'll sleep in a Pullman car and wake up to-morrow, happy and in your right senses, in Jersey City.

BECKY. [*Moves back from him a little.*] You can't turn me out!

[*A pause.* ROLAND *reads the real trouble in her face and becomes serious and sympathetic.*

ROLAND. Becky, you don't really believe what you say about Tom? [*She lowers her head in assent.*] You *know?* [*She lowers her head again.*] There must be a mistake somewhere! [*Puts the cloak on the Morris chair.*] If I ever knew a man who loved his wife! Go back, Becky!

BECKY. It's impossible!

ROLAND. [*Going to her.*] I speak to you with

years of bitter experience behind me, and it's only what good there is left in me which is urging me to say this to you. I know in the end that you'll be nearer happiness than you ever can be any other way. Go back to Tom.

BECKY. No, no, I tell you, father, I've left Tom for good! Keep me with you —

[*A knock on the door.*

ROLAND. Come in!

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in Left and* BECKY *sinks down into the Morris chair.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Worried.*] It's getting pretty late! I didn't know as Mis' Warder knew the street car don't run past here after twelve thirty.

ROLAND. That's all right. Mrs. Warder is taking the one o'clock train to New York. We'll catch the last car.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Relieved, smiles.*] Oh, well, then, you've got plenty of time. I'd better let you have my latch-key, though. I'll leave it on the hall table. [*To* BECKY.] Would you like anything? A glass of raspberry vinegar and a piece of jell cake?

BECKY. No, thanks.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Offended.*] Good evening.

BECKY. Good evening.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *goes out.*

Why did you say I was going? I'm not!

ROLAND. You are. If you love Tom, you'll go. [*He goes to her and puts his arm around her shoulder.*] Do you love Tom still?

BECKY. Yes, father.

ROLAND. Then go back, Becky!

BECKY. No.

ROLAND. Your religion teaches you that the

greatest love always carries with it the power of forgiveness.

BECKY. [*Eagerly.*] Oh, it's what I want to believe. If it's only true — if it's only true of *us!*

ROLAND. You've got to *make* it true by going back! [*He moves away.*] Good God! you shan't repeat your mother's and my mistake and make a miserable failure of both your lives!

[BECKY *looks up surprised.*

BECKY. What mistake?

ROLAND. [*Quietly, ashamed.*] Your mother left me, just as you want to leave Tom.

BECKY. Mother — [*Rises.*] left you?

ROLAND. And for the same reason, do you understand me — that you want to leave Tom.

BECKY. But you never told me!

ROLAND. No.

BECKY. How long before she died?

ROLAND. A year.

BECKY. And how long were you and mother happy together?

ROLAND. A few months — not many.

BECKY. Tom and I have been blissfully happy for six years!

ROLAND. That's an argument for me! Go back!

BECKY. What a lot of lies you've always told me about yourself and mother, — all my life! You always said you were an ideal couple and that it was sorrow over her death that made you what you are!

ROLAND. I was ashamed when you found me out — I wanted some excuse to try and keep your sympathy and affection. Besides, what good would it have done to have told you the truth?

[*He crosses to the table Left, and taking up a*

photograph of his wife, stands looking at it.

BECKY. If you had always told me the truth about everything, I think it would have saved me this night. I've about decided that the truth in everything is the best for everything in the end — if one could only learn to tell it.

ROLAND. You must begin young and you didn't.

BECKY. By whose fault? [ROLAND *turns away from her, feeling the sting.*] Tell me now about you and mother.

[*She sits again in the Morris chair.*

ROLAND. [*By the centre-table.*] Well, your mother accused me as you do Tom But it wasn't true of me, Becky! it wasn't true — then.

BECKY. I'm afraid I don't believe you, father.

ROLAND. You don't believe me when, even

now, after all these years, I tell you it wasn't true?

BECKY. No. I want to believe you, father, but I can't! You've just admitted you've lied to me all my life about you and mother! Why should I believe you would suddenly turn around and tell me the truth now?

ROLAND. At last, one trait in you like your mother! Do all that I could, swear by everything she or I held holy, I couldn't persuade her I was telling the truth!

BECKY. Perhaps you had already destroyed her confidence in you! You can do that, even with some one who loves you, in a day, in an hour, in even less!

ROLAND. It did look ugly against me, and your mother was already disappointed in me. I couldn't live up to her standard. [*He smiles.*]

I was sort of good-looking, when she married me, — too foppish, perhaps, — and I rode my own horses, generally to win, too, — and what part of my income I didn't make on the race-track I made with the ace and right bower! I promised your mother to give up the gambling side of it — but I couldn't, it was in my blood; I tried, Becky, but I failed. I lied to her about it and she found me out and began to distrust me. She was a crank on the subject of lying, anyway. One of those straightforward, narrow-minded, New England women who think everything that isn't the truth is a lie! I always hated the plain truth. I liked to trim it up a little.

BECKY. [*With a nervous, pathetic little laugh.*] Like me!

ROLAND. Yes. I remember how we used to laugh at you as a child! Almost the first words

you spoke were fibs, and gad, the fairy stories you used to tell about yourself!

[*Goes up to table.*

BECKY. Yes. Do you remember the time, father, after I'd been reading Grimm's Fairy Tales about the wicked step-parents, how I told all over Baltimore you were my stepfather and beat me? It made me a real heroine, to the other children, and I loved it! And you found it out, and gave me my choice of being punished or promising never to tell another story! Do you remember?

ROLAND. [*Sits on the arm of the chair and puts his arm about her.*] I could never bear to punish you!

BECKY. I always made up stories about everything. I didn't see any harm — *then* —

ROLAND. Well, your mother said I'd proved

I couldn't tell the truth! She didn't often use plain and ugly words, but she called me a liar, and I've never heard the word since without hearing her voice and seeing her face as she said it!

BECKY. You loved her! Oh, I know how it must have hurt!

ROLAND. She wouldn't believe me, she wouldn't forgive, and she left me! I don't blame her; it was my own fault at bottom! But it's true as land and water, Becky, as true as you're my daughter, God help you, and that I've loved you in my useless, selfish old way, I *was true to your mother.* I loved her, and no other woman existed for me then. I was willing to own up I had broken my word and was a gambler! I was willing to own up I was a liar, even, and perhaps I deserved all I got, but I loved your mother,

and when she went back on me and believed the one thing about me that wasn't true, I gritted my teeth like a damn fool and said, "To hell with women and to the dogs for me!"

BECKY. And it wasn't true! Father! I believe you, it wasn't true!

ROLAND. No, but it was true enough soon after! I kept my word to myself and gave her plenty of reasons not to love me afterwards — and that was the beginning of the end of me.

BECKY. But if you'd only waited, if you'd only given her a chance, wouldn't she have realized?

ROLAND. [*Going to her, puts his hand on her shoulder.*] Yes, and that's why you must go back to Tom to-night. Do you want to repeat your mother's and my story? Go back, Becky!

BECKY. I can't.

ROLAND. Well, I can tell you what Tom'll do if you put off going back to him till it's too late. He'll let you go, and help you to divorce him, so he can marry some other woman, your opposite, and be happy the rest of his life.

BECKY. Father!

[BECKY *shows a new element, jealousy, added to her trouble.*

ROLAND. Or else he'll grow hard and bitter about all women, and the gold years of a man's life will be brass in his mouth — thanks to you!

BECKY. Yes, and I'll live here with you and grow dowdy and slattern, till I'm slovenly all through — body and soul! I won't care how I look or what company I keep in place of the friends who will surely drop me. I'll take up your life here, and my face'll grow flabby and my

heart dry and my spirit fogged, and I'll have nobody to thank for the dead end but myself!

ROLAND. But I won't have it! You've got to go back to Tom to-night! You were happy enough with him this afternoon! He's been a wonderful husband to you and I know the run of them! I don't blame him for not wanting me around, — a father-in-law who was a disgrace to his wife. He did right to keep me here where I'm an old story and nobody cares. I'll own up to this now that you want to turn your back on him. But you shan't do it! You shan't break up his home with a beastly scandal and spoil your whole life and perhaps his, all in one hysterical hour! Listen! [*He goes to her and places his two hands on her shoulders.*] It's true that no one was to blame for what I've sunk to but myself. Still, it's also true that in the be-

ginning, perhaps, a great deal of patience, and more forgiveness, might have made both your mother's life and mine a little more worth living!

[*He turns aside, surprised by a welling up of an almost forgotten emotion.*

BECKY. You don't dream how every word you say cuts and saws into me! But I can't go back!

ROLAND. You will. For if it comes down to this point, I won't keep you here!

BECKY. But I can't go to a hotel! I haven't any money.

ROLAND. I have enough for your ticket, and I'll take you to the station and send a telegram to Tom to expect you in the morning.

BECKY. No, I can't — I can't.

ROLAND. [*Sternly.*] You've *got to!* You can't stay here and I won't give you a cent to stay anywhere else!

BECKY. You wouldn't turn me out into the streets!

ROLAND. Yes, I will, if I must to force you to go back to your husband.

[*He gets her cloak.*

BECKY. [*Rises, desperate.*] Father!

ROLAND. [*Struck by her tone, pauses.*] Well?

BECKY. [*Drops her head and with a great effort speaks, her voice sinking almost to a whisper.*] I haven't left Tom — it's Tom's left me —

[*A pause.* ROLAND *stands looking at her and her cloak drops from his hand, as he slowly takes in what she means.*

ROLAND. What do you say?

BECKY. Tom has left me — now you know why I can't go back.

ROLAND. What for?

BECKY. He called me what mother called you.

He's lost confidence in me. He believes — there's some one else.

[*The last in agony of shame and grief.*

ROLAND. No wonder you made me worm out the truth! I wouldn't have believed it of you, Becky! I wouldn't have believed it of you!

BECKY. [*Frightened.*] But it isn't true, father!

ROLAND. Why didn't you tell me the right story in the beginning?

BECKY. [*Aghast.*] Father! don't you believe me?

ROLAND. You denied it to him, I suppose?

BECKY. Of course.

ROLAND. And he turned you out all the same?

BECKY. He didn't turn me out; he only refused to stay in the house with me. I came away!

ROLAND. Well, if your husband doesn't believe in you, how can you expect me to, who've

known all your life you couldn't tell the truth?

BECKY. Father, I've told you the truth now! For God's sake, believe me, for if *you* won't believe me either, what will become of me?

ROLAND. I can help you better if you'll be honest with me. A man like Tom Warder isn't putting the wife he's been a slave to out of his life without good reason.

[*He turns away from her.*

BECKY. You said you knew the look in my face when I lied, because it was your look. [*Goes to him and stands close, facing him.*] Look in my face now and tell me what you see there. [*She speaks very simply and clearly.*] I love Tom and only Tom and never have loved any other man and have never been anything but faithful and true in my love for him. [ROLAND *stands*

silently looking into her face, still unconvinced.] I stand with Tom exactly, father, where you stood the day mother left you —

[*His face begins to change. A knock on the door Left.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Outside.*] If Mis' Warder wants to catch that train, I hear the car coming!

BECKY. [*Breathlessly seizing hold of him with her two hands.*] Father!

ROLAND. Mrs. Warder's changed her mind. She's stopping here to-night.

[*Putting his arms about her.*

BECKY. Father!

[*Her tension gives way, and she lies limp in his arms, her slender body shaking with the emotion which now masters her as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT IV

MR. ROLAND'S *rooms in* MRS. CRESPIGNY'S *flat, the following Monday. The sun pours in through the bow-window; folded bedclothes and a pillow are placed neatly on one end of the sofa.* BECKY *and* ROLAND *are having coffee together at the centre-table. The cloth is soiled, other things in the room are in disorder, and everything is decidedly unappetizing.* ROLAND *is wearing a slovenly bathrobe; a newspaper is propped against the coffee pot before him.*

BECKY. How horrid and messy everything is!

ROLAND. [*Who is smoking a cigarette as he*

eats.] Oh, you'll get used to it. Before you know it you'll like things best this way.

BECKY. Not if I can help it. I shall fight against it.

ROLAND. You think so now; you've only had one day at it.

BECKY. To begin with, my dear father, you mustn't come to breakfast with me in that disgusting bathrobe.

ROLAND. If you imagine for a minute I'm going to let you come here and upset everything to rob me of my comfort, you'll have your hands full.

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *is heard playing a piano in a farther room through most of the scene. Her repertoire is varied, and consists of an old waltz, a coon song, the "Melody in F," and "Waiting at the Church."*

BECKY. [*With an effort at a smile.*] It will be another fight then, father, such as we used to have. Only this time I'm stronger by six years' life with a splendid character, which will help me bring you and myself up to Tom's level, rather than go down with you to this.

ROLAND. [*To change the subject.*] Have you written Tom?

BECKY. [*Sighing.*] A hundred letters, I should think.

ROLAND. And no answer?

BECKY. No, there isn't time.

ROLAND. Yes, he could telegraph.

BECKY. But I didn't send any of the letters.

ROLAND. [*Looking up from his newspaper.*] You aren't eating anything.

BECKY. [*Rising in disgust, goes and sits in Morris chair.*] Father, we can't live here, can we?

You must tell Mrs. Crespigny, and I'll find a little flat, just for us two —

ROLAND. [*Irritably.*] I knew it would come to that! Not satisfied with upsetting Warder's existence and your own, you've got to come here and upset mine! No, sir! I'll marry Mrs. C. before I'll leave here.

BECKY. That's a threat I know you won't carry out. I've had two long, long nights to think things over. I wish I could die, but I know one can't die when one wants to. I know sorrow, however heartbreaking, doesn't kill, — and I'm so horribly healthy I'll probably live forever. I may even have to stand aside and see Tom happy with some one else. Well, all the same I mean to live exactly as I would if I were still with Tom. I'm going to live as if every day, every hour, I was expecting him back. I'm

going to live so that if he ever should come back to me — I will be ready to go home with him.

[*The music stops for a moment.*

ROLAND. That's all very well for you, but I don't see why I should have to live a life to please Tom — just so you can leave me in the lurch when he comes back after you. The odds are pretty strong against his wanting me to go home with him too! I've never ridden yet according to his rules, and I don't intend to begin now.

[*Goes to far table in the bow-window and takes a fresh cigarette and changes his paper for another.*

BECKY. [*Rising, takes the bedclothes from the sofa*] Don't forget, father, what little money we have is mine, so you'll have to live as I wish. And in the end I believe you'll thank me.

[*She goes into the bedroom.*

ROLAND. But in the beginning I'll damn you, and in the end too! I'm too old a leopard to change my spots.

[*He makes himself comfortable in the Morris chair.*

BECKY. [*Coming out of the bedroom.*] I'm going to try just as hard as I can not to tell even little lies, no matter how small, just to see if I can't get into the habit of always telling the truth. Because he might come back, father, don't you think so? Don't you think maybe he'll come back?

ROLAND. I'm doing my best to make him.

BECKY. [*Surprised and eager.*] How?

ROLAND. Never mind how. I'll tell you if it works.

BECKY. [*Piling the breakfast dishes on the tray.*] I hoped he'd answer the note I sent by

Jenks, but he didn't. No; when Tom says a thing, he means it. I'm going out for a little while.

[*She places the tray on the table Left.*

ROLAND. Where?

BECKY. There's a small empty flat two doors below here; I'm going to look it over. I think it may do for us.

[*She goes into the bedroom.*

ROLAND. Don't be gone long, because I might need you.

BECKY. [*In the bedroom.*] For what?

ROLAND. To help receive Tom!

BECKY. [*Coming out quickly.*] Father!

ROLAND. Don't get your expectations too high, but I telegraphed him yesterday to come here.

[*The piano is heard again, but stops during* BECKY'S *long speech.*

BECKY. If he wouldn't come for me, he wouldn't come because you asked him.

ROLAND. I feel if only you could get face to face with him, Becky, especially now when he's had time to think things over, to realize calmly, away from the heat of anger, that whatever your faults might be —

BECKY. [*Interrupts eagerly, going toward him.*] Yes, yes —

ROLAND. Lack of love for him and faithlessness couldn't be among them.

BECKY. Yes, if I could see him! [*She kneels on the floor beside him, her arms on the arm of the chair.*] I feel that if there's left in the bottom of his heart — no matter how deep down — just a little love for me, if it's only the memory of what he once had, wouldn't my own love be some sort of a magnet to bring his back? If I could

sit and talk to him, hold his hand, go back over our life a little, couldn't I make him see that I loved him — and only him, that what I'd done had been foolish — wrong not to do as he wished — but only *that* wrong — and that I've learned something by this terrible lesson? And if I promised to try with all my might and main not to lie any more, if I promised I wouldn't be discouraged with failure if he wouldn't be, but would keep on trying, wouldn't he on his side try to have a little confidence again? Wouldn't he let me come back into his life just for that trial anyway? . . .

ROLAND. I think so. A man like Warder can't get over loving a woman all in a moment, especially if he finds out before it's too late he's misjudged her. Wrong as you may have been, we know you're not so wrong as he thinks.

BECKY. But he won't come. You see you haven't heard from him — he won't come.

[*She goes up to the bow-window and looks out.*

ROLAND. I'm a little worried myself. I told him to telegraph and said it was urgent.

BECKY. How — urgent?

ROLAND. Well, my dear, as you say, if I had simply said, "Come and see Becky," of course he wouldn't have paid any attention. I had to make the telegram so he would come.

BECKY. Yes, but how did you?

ROLAND. It was a stroke of genius! I said, "Becky is dying. Come at once!"

BECKY. [*Going to the sofa and sitting on it.*] But I'm not dying. He'll find out as soon as he gets here.

ROLAND. No, he mustn't. My idea was that he would think you had tried to kill yourself —

don't you see? It would rouse his sympathies — perhaps some remorse — and he would hurry on.

[*Dropping the paper carelessly on the floor, he rises.*

BECKY. But he hasn't!

ROLAND. He couldn't get here till this morning; still, I ought to have had an answer to the telegram.

[*He goes into the bedroom.*

BECKY. [*Rises and goes toward the opening.*] And if he should come?

ROLAND. [*Coming out of the bedroom in his shirt-sleeves, without the bathrobe.*] Well, you must be careful not to give me away till you are solid with him again. You must be weak and ill — just getting over it — the doctor's saved you! Anyway, I thought that might bring him.

BECKY. I don't like it.

ROLAND. [*Going back into the bedroom offended.*] I did my best!

BECKY. But it seems to me as if I would be telling Tom a lie again.

ROLAND. Not at all. I'm telling it. And besides, doesn't the end justify the means?

BECKY. I think Tom'd call it a lie. I don't want to do it!

ROLAND. Well, if he comes in answer to my telegram, you've *got* to do it!

BECKY. No, father, I won't!

ROLAND. Nonsense! You can't get out of it. And, good Heavens, why should you, if it's going to give you back what you want and prevent a terrible upheaval?

[*The piano is heard again.*

BECKY. Well, anyway, he hasn't answered, so perhaps he won't come. I'm going out.

[*Gets her hat from table Left.*

ROLAND. Don't be long in any case. He might have forgot to send word, or not have time, or even have suspected something and not answered purposely, and be coming all the same on this morning's train!

BECKY. [*Putting on her hat.*] I'll see the flat and come straight back. [*She starts to go, stops and turns in the doorway.*] Thank you, father, for trying to help me. If he only *will* come!

[*She goes out Left.*

ROLAND. [*Lighting another cigarette.*] Move into another flat! To live with everything so filthy clean you can't be easy and let things go! Ta, ta to the bucket-shop, and never a cent to put on anything again! Nothing but cleanth and economy! No, no, Stephen Roland, not at your age. [*He stands gazing at a portrait of* MRS. CRFS-

PIGNY *on the Right wall, with a half-humorous expression of resignation, then crosses to the electric bell on the Left wall.*] Listen, don't you hear wedding bells? [*He rings the bell.*] Do you hear them, Stephen! [*He rings again. The piano off stage stops.*] Wedding bells! [*He turns and walks toward the portrait again, nodding his head definitely. A knock on the door Left.*] Come in — *Jennie!*

[MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Did you ring?

ROLAND. I believe I did.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. What's the matter? My piano-playing disturb Mis' Warder?

ROLAND. Oh, — is the pianola mended?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Yes. The man said I worked the pedals too emotionally.

ROLAND. I wanted to see you.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Pulling her belt down and her marcel wave out.*] Well, I'm visible!

ROLAND. Mrs. Crespigny, I'm in trouble.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going to him.*] Now look here, Mr. Roland, true as Gospel I can't let you have another cent, not before the first of the month. Your daughter's here now; you've got to go to her.

ROLAND. Not so fast, please! It isn't money. At least that isn't this moment's trouble. My daughter and her husband have quarrelled.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I suspected something was wrong. [*She starts, aghast and angry at a new idea which comes to her.*] *She don't mean to come here and live?*

ROLAND. No, she wants to take me away to live with her.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Didn't I always tell you

she'd separate us if she could! Now show your character! I guess you're your own boss, ain't you? You won't go, Mr. Roland?

ROLAND. But you see if they don't make up their quarrel, my allowance stops and I won't have a cent. I'll have to live where my daughter wants me.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Taking from the bosom of her shirt-waist a second hand natural rose with a wired stem, and destitute of green leaves, she twists the wired part nervously about.*] Why ain't one woman's money just as good as another's for you to live on?

ROLAND. Mrs Crespigny, you've come straight to the point, and you've come pretty bluntly, but that's just as well in view of the poor figure I cut in the matter.

[*He turns up toward the centre-table and places*

on it his newspaper, which he has picked up from the floor.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Why, I think, considering your age, your figger's great!

ROLAND. [*Looking at her despairingly.*] I spoke figuratively! Now I'm doing my best to bring about a reconciliation. Of course, if I succeed, I can keep on living here just as usual — I'll have my allowance.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. But if you don't bring about the reconciliation? . . .

ROLAND. Well, in that case, frankly, I should have to leave you or marry you!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going to the table.*] Look here, Mr. Roland, I want this in black and white! Are you proposing to me?

ROLAND. Well, Mrs. Crespigny, in a way —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. But there's a string to it?

ROLAND. You know you have once or twice delicately suggested that a marriage wouldn't be altogether disagreeable to you, but it's a poor bargain for you, and in case the proposal should ever be definitely made, I want to be sure you know what you're getting!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I guess I know well enough. I ain't lived in the same flat with you for four solid years without finding out whether or not you was worth it *to me.* I know your faults, Mr. Roland, but they're swell faults.

ROLAND. [*He goes to the table in the window to get a cigarette.*] Mrs. Crespigny, suppose you keep to the point, which is, if I marry — if you marry me, you do it with your eyes open. I'm to have all the liberty I've ever had. None of my habits are to be interfered with, none of my ways of spending money.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. All right. I know I won't be marrying a hero, but I'll be getting a high-toned name and the company I want for keeps, for if once we're married, your daughter nor nobody else won't sneak you away from me, and you can't get nothing in this world for nothing.

[*She sits Right of the table with a lugubrious expression on her poor powdered face.*

ROLAND. Very well, then, [*Coming down to her.*] if there's no reconciliation to-day, we'll consider it settled without another word.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. And if she does make it up with her husband?

ROLAND. We'll let that stand for the present. I would still have my allowance and I wouldn't have to leave the flat.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Then, so far as I'm concerned,

— and I don't make no bones about saying it, — I'd rather they kep' separate.

ROLAND. Don't be selfish! I think you'll win without that. [*He lifts her head tenderly, smiling sweetly; then, as he turns away from her the sweetness fades, and he looks at least twenty years older.* MRS. CRESPIGNY, *happy but embarrassed, tears the faded rose to pieces petal by petal.*] I don't understand it. I ought to have had a telegram long ago!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Starts and rises.*] A telegram! My stars! this telegram came before you was up and I forgot all about it.

[*Giving him a telegram.*

ROLAND. That won't do! You'll have to be more thoughtful than that! [*Reading the telegram.*] He's coming! He's due here any minute!

And Beck out! Quick! help me make this look like a sick room.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. A sick room?

ROLAND. I'll put this chair here for Becky to sit in!

[*Moving the Morris chair near to the table.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. And I'll put a towel on the table. [*Getting one from the bedroom.*] But why a sick room, Mr. Roland! Who's sick?

ROLAND. That's how I got him here. Telegraphed Becky was dying — and it's worked — he's coming!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You ought to have some bottles for medicine!

ROLAND. Bottles? Here's a couple!

[*Getting a whiskey bottle and a brandy bottle from the sideboard.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Taking the bottles from*

him.] You don't want him to think she's been on a spree, do you? [*She puts them on the table Left.*] Put a glass of water on the table. [*He gets a glass from the sideboard.*] And I'll put this saucer and spoon on top — that'll look like homeopathic stuff. [*She places a saucer on the table and breathes on the spoon and polishes it on a corner of table-cloth.* ROLAND *gets a pillow and a blanket from the bedroom and arranges them in the Morris chair.*] Do you know what we ought to have on that table? An orange on a plate! I don't know why it is, but it always looks like sick folks, having an orange on a plate by 'em! Wait a minute. I've got a marble orange just like real. I'll get it. I'll take the tray. [MRS. CRESPIGNY *with the tray at the door Left.*] Josephine! Josephine! Oh, never mind if your hands are in the suds! [ROLAND *gets a hassock, which he places in front of*

the Morris chair. He pulls down the window-shades, takes the siphon, and fills the glass on the table, putting the saucer and spoon on top of it. MRS. CRESPIGNY *enters with an imitation orange on a plate.*] Here it is! And I brought a knife with it — don't it look natural?

[*The front bell rings.*

ROLAND. Becky!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. No — I let her take the key!

ROLAND. Maybe it's he! And Becky not back! Don't let Josephine open the door yet!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Opens the Left door and calls.*] Josephine! Josy! I'll tend door; you go on with your washing!

[*She shuts the door.*

ROLAND. Show him here —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Huh, huh?

ROLAND. And I'll tell him the doctor's with Becky —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Huh, huh?

ROLAND. Then you watch for her, and when she comes, knock on the door and tell me the doctor's gone —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Doubtfully.*] Huh, huh —

ROLAND. Then I'll go "to find out if she feels able to see him," and bring her in as if from her bedroom.

[*He goes to the Morris chair and arranges the pillow and blanket.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. It's lucky I don't have to tell him all that! You know, I haven't got your —*imagination!* . . .

ROLAND. That's all right — you'll see, — they'll be reconciled!

[*Gets a fan from behind the book-rack on the back wall and puts it on the table.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Reconciled!

ROLAND. Yes, yes, they'll be reconciled!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. *Our* marriage is as good as off then!

ROLAND. Yes, yes — I mean we'll see! [*The front bell rings again.*] Don't keep him waiting — he might get suspicious!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Turning the matter over in her mind, speaks very abstractedly.*] Our marriage is as good as off then!

[*She goes out slowly, weighing this sudden complication in her affairs.*

ROLAND. Well, you never know your luck! No, no, don't close the door! I'll be here, expecting him.

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Off stage.*] How do you do? Won't you come right in?

[WARDER *enters*

ROLAND. So you've come, Tom?

WARDER. [*Very serious.*] How is she, father?

ROLAND. The doctor is with her now. Mrs. Crespigny will let me know when he's gone. I haven't let her know I telegraphed you.

WARDER. But will she get well? Is she no worse?

ROLAND. We have every hope of her getting well.

WARDER. [*He turns aside to control a sudden flood of emotion.*] Thank God!

ROLAND. I think a good deal now depends upon you. [WARDER *faces* ROLAND. ROLAND *goes to him.*] Are you ready to take my daughter back?

WARDER. [*Very quietly, soberly.*] Yes.

ROLAND. For good?

WARDER. If I can only feel sure Becky will try — only *try* — to be straightforward and honest

with me, that's all I ask. God knows what I've suffered these two days, and when your message came — oh, to have that on my shoulders too — it would have been more than a man could bear!

ROLAND. Whatever Becky's faults may have been, you did her one terrible injustice!

WARDER. Yes, I know that now! Becky, — never! Father, hour after hour since the one in which I left her, I've paced up and down my room, or sat and gritted my teeth in the train, and thought — and thought — and *thought* — till the anger died out of me and I began to see things white and clear both ahead and behind me. And all the time Becky's final words kept ringing in my ears, and they rang *true:* "I love you, and only you, and you always." . . . And the further away from the excitement and anger I got, the saner I grew. And as I passed over our life to-

gether, second by second of happiness, I found only proof after proof of her love for me! Yes, I did Becky one great injustice, and I want to ask her to forgive me.

ROLAND. [*His better self moved. Takes* TOM'S *hand.*] Tom —

WARDER. After all, life is made up of compromises and concessions, and if Becky will only try, and let me help her —

ROLAND. I believe you love her still?

WARDER. I can only answer you by saying that I want more than anything else in the world to believe in her again — to have at least the beginning of confidence.

[*With a knock on the door,* MRS. CRESPIGNY *comes in, frightened at what she is going to do.* ROLAND *hesitates one moment, but his old habit soon reasserts itself.*

ROLAND. The doctor gone? [MRS. CRESPIGNY *nods her head.*] Excuse me.

[*He hurries out Left.* MRS. CRESPIGNY *stands looking after* ROLAND, *evidently trying to nerve herself up to the task of telling* WARDER *the truth. She makes several ineffectual gasping efforts to speak, and finally gets started, rushing her words and not daring to speak slowly for fear she'd stop.*

MRS. CRESPIGNY. I'm going to do something awful, and I only hope I won't be punished for it all the rest of my life. Lord knows, seems as if I'd been punished enough in advance. Can I trust you?

WARDER. In what way?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. As a gentleman. If I tell you something — something that you ought to

know — will you promise to see it through and not let on I told you?

WARDER. I don't know if I can promise that. Is it anything you have a right to tell me?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Going toward him.*] It won't do you no harm to pertect me, and I give you my sacred word of honor it's the truth instead of the lie you've been told! And all I ask is that you'll pertect me as regards Mr. Roland.

WARDER. [*Astounded, bewildered, but his suspicions rearroused.*] What lie? Go on. I give you the promise!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Whispers.*] She ain't sick!

WARDER. Who?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Mis' Warder! She ain't been sick — that was all a story to get you here!

WARDER. [*Catching her two hands by the wrists*

and holding them tight, so she can't get away from him.] No! don't say that!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Ssh! I will say it! It's true! The doctor wasn't here when you came! Mis' Warder was out and only came in when I knocked on the door just now!

WARDER. Do you realize what you're saying?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Perfeckly!

WARDER. And you're telling me the truth?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. Keep your eyes open and judge for yourself, that's all! Maybe you think *that's* the truth!

[*Snatching up the imitation orange from the table, she smashes it on the floor.* WARDER *moves to go; she stands in front of the door to stop him.*

WARDER. Let me go! I won't stay for this brutal farce!

MRS. CRESPIGNY. You promised to pertect me, and if you go now Mr. Roland'll catch on, and I want him to marry me! Now you know —

WARDER. Was this his idea or hers?

MRS. CRESPIGNY. His, and she —

[*Listens.*

WARDER. [*Eagerly.*] She what —

MRS. CRESPIGNY. [*Moving away from the door.*] Ssh! they're here!

[WARDER *controls himself and goes to the other side of the room.* ROLAND *comes, bringing* BECKY, *who leans on him. Her eyes are down.* WARDER *stands immovable and watches.*

ROLAND. [*Pointedly.*] Thank you, Mrs. Crespigny.

[*She goes out unwillingly.* BECKY *looks up and sees* WARDER. *He stands motionless, watching her.*

BECKY. [*As she meets* WARDER'S *eyes, breaks away from* ROLAND.] No, father! I can't do it! I won't do it!

ROLAND. [*Frightened.*] Becky!

BECKY. No! I tell you it's only another lie and a revolting one!

ROLAND. You're ill! You don't know what you're saying!

BECKY. No, I'm not ill, and you know it, and I haven't been! And if I can't win his love back by the truth, I'll never be able to keep it, so what's the use of getting it back at all?

[*The tears fill her eyes and her throat.*

WARDER. Becky!

[*He wants to go to her, but still holds himself back. His face shows his joy, but neither* BECKY *nor* ROLAND *see this.*

BECKY. [*Continues after a moment, pathetically.*]

I thought I might creep back, through pity, first into your life, and then into your heart again. But, after all, I can't do it. [*She sits in the Morris chair, hopelessly.*] Something's happened to me in these two days — even if I tell lies, I've learned to loathe them and be afraid of them, and all the rest of my life I'll try —

WARDER. [*In a choked voice.*] Thank God!

[*He goes to her, almost in tears himself.* ROLAND *looks at* WARDER, *and realizes what it means; a smile comes over his own face, and at the same time his eyes fill with his almost-forgotten tears.*

BECKY. You can't forgive me!

WARDER. We don't love people because they are perfect.

[*He takes her two trembling hands in his, and she rises.*

BECKY. Tom!

WARDER. We love them because they are themselves.

[*And he takes her in his arms close to him, as the final*

CURTAIN FALLS

THE CITY

A MODERN PLAY OF AMERICAN LIFE
IN THREE ACTS

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THE CITY

ACT I. MIDDLEBURG, NEW YORK. *The Library in the* RAND *House.*

ACT II. NEW YORK CITY. *The Library in the* RAND *House.*

Several Years Later.

ACT III. THE SAME.

A Few Hours Later.

THE PERSONS IN THE PLAY

GEORGE D. RAND.
GEORGE D. RAND, JR.
MRS. RAND.
TERESA RAND.
CICELY RAND.
ALBERT F. VORHEES.
ELEANOR VORHEES.
GEORGE FREDERICK HANNOCK.
DONALD VAN VRANKEN.
SUSAN. *Maidservant in Middleburg.*
JOHN. *The coachman in Middleburg.*
FOOT. *Butler in New York.*

Originally produced at the Lyric Theatre, New York, December 22, 1909, with the following cast:

George D. Rand	A. H. Stuart
George D. Rand, Jr.	Walter Hampden
Mrs. Rand	Eva Vincent
Teresa Rand	Lucile Watson
Cicely Rand	Mary Nash
Albert F. Vorhees	George Howell
Eleanor Vorhees	Helen Holmes
George Frederick Hannock	Tully Marshall
Donald Van Vranken	Edward Emery
Susan	Jane Gail
John	John Jex
Foot	Fred Courtenay

ACT I

SCENE: *At the* RANDS'. *The library of a substantial house in Middleburg. Front doors open out into the "front hall." It is furnished in a "set" of rosewood furniture, upholstered in brown and red figured velvet. The walls are covered with dark maroon wall-paper, with framed photographs of Thorwaldsen's "Four Seasons," and over the mantel there is an engraving of "Washington Crossing the Delaware." A rocking-chair and an armchair are in front of the grate fire. Lace curtains and heavy curtains are draped back from two French windows that look out on a covered piazza. There are a desk, a bookcase with glass doors, a "centre*

table" on which stands a double, green-shaded "Student's lamp," a few novels, and some magazines. Near the bookcase is a stand holding a "Rogers' Group." There are jars and bowls filled with flowers everywhere.

RAND *enters with the New York evening papers, The Post, The Sun; he half yawns, half sighs with fatigue. He starts to make his arm-chair ready before the fire; stops and goes over to his desk, where he finds a letter which he dislikes, recognizing the handwriting.*

RAND. [*Angry.*] Yes, still keeping it up, the young blackguard!

[*He tears the letter in two, and throws it into the fire without reading it. He watches it burn a second, lighting a cigar; then takes his papers, makes himself comfortable in his chair before the fire, and starts to read.*

After a second, MRS. RAND *and* CICELY, *a very pretty girl of about seventeen, enter.* MRS. RAND *carries a pitcher of water, scissors, and a newspaper.* CICELY *has her arms full of yellow tulips and a big bowl.*

MRS. RAND. Why, father! Aren't you home early? Teresa's train won't be in for an hour or so yet.

[MRS. RAND, *filling the bowl with water, spreads the newspaper on the table; then cuts off the stems, and hands the flowers one by one to* CICELY, *who arranges them.*

RAND. I felt tired to-day, Molly. My head bothers me!

MRS. RAND. [*Going to him with affection and solicitude.*] Why don't you lie down? [*She lays her hand on his head.*] You haven't any fever. [*She kisses his forehead.*] You're just over-

tired! [*He pats her hand affectionately, and holds it.*] When are you going to give up business entirely, darling, and leave it all to George?

RAND. Never, I'm afraid, dear. [*Letting go her hand.*] I've tried to face the idea, but the idleness appalls me.

CICELY. Mother, have you the scissors?

MRS. RAND. Yes, dear.

[*Joins her, and continues with the flowers.*

RAND. Besides, *George* is too restless, too discontented yet, for me to trust him with my two banks! He's got the New York bee in his bonnet.

CICELY. [*Glances at her mother before she speaks.*] Oh! We all have that, father, — except you.

RAND. And mother!

CICELY. Humph! Mother's just as bad as the rest of us. Only she's afraid to say so.

[*Smiling.*] Go on, mother, own up you've got villiageitis and cityphobia!

MRS. RAND. [*Smiling.*] I *dare*, only I don't want to bother your father!

RAND. That's the effect of George, — and Teresa. I've noticed all the innuendos in her letters home. Europe's spoiled the girl! The New York school started the idea, but I hoped travel would cure her, and instead —!

MRS. RAND. Wait till you see her. Remember, in spite of letters, what a year may have done for her. Oh, I'm so eager to see her! What a long hour this is!

[*The telephone bell rings out in the hall.* MRS. RAND *goes out and is heard saying*, "Hello! Yes, who is it? Oh, is it you, Katherine?"

RAND. [*Reading his paper.*] Who's that talking to your mother?

CICELY. One of Middleburg's Social Queens, Mrs. Mulholland — known in our society as the lady who can wear a décolleté gown, cut in accordance with the Middleburg limit, and not look as if she'd dressed in a hurry and forgotten her collar!

[RAND *laughs.*

MRS. RAND. [*Off stage.*] Really! I should think she was much too old to be so advanced in the styles as that!

CICELY. The flowers are lovely all over the house. Father, you ought to see them! They came from a New York florist. [MRS. RAND *off stage:* "Good-by. See you at five."] Our man here hadn't anything but ferns and aniline-dyed pinks.

MRS. RAND. [*Reënters.*] Kate Mulholland called up to tell me Mary Carterson's mother-in-

law is visiting her from South Norwalk, and went down street this morning wearing one of those new washtub hats, — and she's sixty, if she isn't over! She was born in 1846, — at least she *used* to be!

RAND. [*Still reading.*] When do you expect your crowd to come this afternoon?

CICELY. Crowd? [*She laughs derisively.*] The only thing that can get a crowd in Middleburg is a fire or a funeral!

MRS. RAND. As we expect Teresa at four, I asked everybody to come in at five. But you know, father, "*everybody*" in Middleburg isn't *many!*

CICELY. Not many — nor *much!*

RAND. You have the best the town affords, and it's good old stock!

CICELY. I'm afraid Tess'll think it's rather

tame for a girl who has been presented at *two European courts!*

MRS. RAND. Yes, I'm afraid she'll find it awfully dull. Don't you think, father, we could go to New York, if only for the winter months?

RAND. Don't tell me *you're* ambitious, too?

MRS. RAND. Well, I've done all, in a social way, a woman can in Middleburg, and I want to do more.

CICELY. You can't tell the difference in Middleburg between a smart afternoon tea and a Mother's Meeting, or a Sunday-school teacher's conclave, or a Lenten Sewing Circle, or a Fair for the Orphan Asylum, or any other like "Event"! It's always the same old people and the same old thing! Oh, Lord, we live in a cemetery!

RAND. Molly, wouldn't you rather be *it* in Middleburg — than *nit* in the City?

MRS. RAND. But with your influence and our friends, — we'd take letters, — I would soon have the position your wife was entitled to in the City, too.

CICELY. I don't care a darn about the position, if I can only have something to do, and something to see! Who wants to smell new-mown hay, if he can breathe in gasolene on Fifth Avenue instead! Think of the theatres! the crowds! *Think* of being able to go out on the street and *see some one you didn't know even by sight!!*

RAND. [*Laughs, amused.*] Molly! How can *you* deceive yourself? A banker from a small country town would give you about as much position as he could afford to pay for on the West Side, above Fifty-ninth Street.

MRS. RAND. But, *George* said you'd been

asked to join a big corporation in New York, which would make the family's everlasting fortune, and social position beside.

RAND. [*Looks up, angry.*] George had no right telling you that. I told him only in confidence. What is this anyway, — a family conspiracy?

CICELY. No, it is the American legation shut up in Peking, longing for a chance to escape from social starvation.

RAND. [*Thoroughly irritated.*] Now listen! This has got to stop, once and for all! So long as I'm the head of this family, it's going to *keep it's head* and not lose it! And our home is *here*, and *will be here*, if to hold it I have to die in harness.

MRS. RAND. [*Going to him affectionately.*] Father, don't be angry! You know *your will is*

law with all of us. And so long as you want it, we'll stay right here.

CICELY. Giving teas to the wallflower brigade, and dinners to the Bible class! And our cotillion favors will be articles appropriate for the missionaries' boxes! Oh, Lord!

RAND. Mother, Cicely has convinced me of *one thing*.

CICELY. [*Delighted.*] Not really! Good! What?

RAND. *You* go to no *finishing school* in *New York!* You get *finished* all you're going to, right here in Middleburg. New York would completely turn your head!

CICELY. Well, don't worry; Middleburg will "*finish*" me all right! Good and strong! Maybe New York would turn your head, but Middleburg turns my —

[*She is going to say "stomach," but her mother interrupts.*

MRS. RAND. Cicely!

[*Enter* GEORGE. *He is a handsome, clean-cut young American, of about twenty-seven.*

GEORGE. Hello, everybody!

RAND. [*Surprised.*] Hello, George! What's the matter? It's only half past four! Nothing happened in the office?

GEORGE. Nothing! *All day!* That's why I am here. I thought I'd be in good time for Tess; and, so far as missing anything *really doing in the office* is concerned, I could have left at ten this morning — [*adds half aside*] or almost any morning, *in this — our city!*

CICELY. Look out! The word "*city*" is a red rag to a bull with father, to-day! And it's for good in the graveyard! I'm going to dress.

Thank the Lord, I've actually got somebody new to look smart for, if it's only my sister!

[*Yawns and starts to go.*

RAND. Who's coming to your tea party?

CICELY. [*As she goes out.*] All the names are on the tombstones in the two churchyards, plus Miss Carterson's mother-in-law from South Norwalk!

MRS. RAND. I must dress, too. [*Going over to* RAND.] Dear, aren't you going to change your coat, and help me?

RAND. Oh, Molly, don't ask me to bore myself with your old frumps!

MRS. RAND. *I have to!* And I don't know that *I* take any more interest than *you* do in what sort of a hat Mary Carterson's mother is wearing! But if it were in New York —

RAND. [*Sneers.*] Stop! I meant what I said — let's drop that!

MRS. RAND. All right, — I didn't say anything!

GEORGE. Look here, father, — mother's right.

RAND. [*Interrupting.*] No, *you* do the "*looking*," George, — and straight *in my eyes!* [*He does so.*] Your mother's wrong, but it isn't *her* fault, — it's *you* children.

MRS. RAND. [*Remonstrating.*] Now, father —

GEORGE. But we're *not children*, and that's the mistake you make! *I'm* twenty-seven.

MRS. RAND. Yes, father, you forget, — George is twenty-seven!

GEORGE. I'm no longer a *boy!*

RAND. Then why did you tell your mother about this offer I had from New York, when I told you it was absolutely *confidential!* And a *man* in business knows what the word "*confidential*" means.

MRS. RAND. It was *my* fault; *I* wormed it out of George!

GEORGE. Nonsense, mother! [*To his father.*] I told, because I thought you needed a good, big hump, and I believed, if all of us put our shoulders to it, we could move you.

RAND. Out of Middleburg?

GEORGE. Yes!

RAND. *Into New York?*

GEORGE. Yes!

RAND. Listen, George, —

GEORGE. [*Going on.*] What position is there for a fellow like me in a hole like this?

[RAND *tries to interrupt.*

MRS. RAND. [*Stops him.*] No, father, let George have his say out!

RAND. All right! Come on, George, we'll have it out now, — but this must *settle it!*

GEORGE. You grew up with this town. You and Middleburg reached your prime together, — so she's good enough for you. Besides, you are *part of it*; so you haven't any point of view, — you're too close!

RAND. What's good enough for your father ought to be good enough for you.

MRS. RAND. That's true, George.

GEORGE. *Grandfather Rand* was a real estate dealer in East Middleburg, with an income of about two thousand a year. I notice *your father's limit* wasn't good enough for you!

RAND. No, but *my* father turned me loose, without a cent, to make my own way! *Your* father will leave you the *richest man in your town*, — with the best established name, with two banks as safe as Gibraltar behind you!

GEORGE. But, I tell you, Middleburg and her

banks are just as picayune to *me*, in comparison with the *City* and a *big career there*, as *East Middleburg and real estate* were to *you* in *1860!*

RAND. Good God, how little you know of the struggle and fight *I* went through!

GEORGE. No, sir! Good God —

RAND. [*Interrupting.*] Don't swear before your father. I don't like it!

GEORGE. Well, — what *you* don't realize is that *I* am just starving after a big fight and a big struggle — for even bigger stakes than *you* fought for! I'm my father's own son — [*Going up to him with a sudden impulse of pride and affection, and putting his arm about his shoulder.*] Accept this great city chance, father! There's millions in it, *and no fight!* They're offering the position to you on a gold plate. All I'll ask of you afterward is to launch me. Give me a

start; the rest will be up to me! All I'll ask you to do then is *watch.*

RAND. No, I'm too old now.

MRS. RAND. Now *I* must join in! It's ridiculous you calling yourself too old. Besides, it reflects on me! [*Smiling.*] Men and women of our age in the City dress and act just as young as their children, more or less. *Old age* has gone out of fashion! There's no such thing, except in dull little *country towns!*

GEORGE. Exactly! That's just what stagnation in the small place does for you. Come to the City, father! It'll give you a new lease of life!

RAND. No, I *don't want* to!

GEORGE. I wouldn't have the selfish courage to go on persuading you, if I didn't feel you'd be *glad of it in the end.* And besides, you're *one* against *all the rest* of us, — Mother, Teresa,

Cicely — we're all choking here, dying of exasperation, *dry-rotting* for *not enough to do!*

RAND. Not at all! It's only amusement and excitement you children are after, and you've inoculated your mother with the germ.

MRS. RAND. No! If I'm restless and dissatisfied here, it's my own fault. I sympathize with Teresa having to come back to this, after New York and all Europe. I'm tired, myself, of our humdrum, empty existence. I'm tired of being the leading woman in a society where there's nobody to lead! I'm tired of the narrow point of view here! I'm tired of living to-day on yesterday's news, and wearing styles adapted to what Middleburg will stand for! I sympathize with Cicely. I want her to have a chance with the *real* world — not our expurgated edition! I know what she means when

she says the quiet of the country gets on her nerves! that the birds keep her awake! that she longs for the rest of a cable-car and the lullaby of a motor-bus! Yes, I want the City for myself, but even more for my children, and most of all for George to make a name and career for himself!

RAND. You've all got an exaggerated idea of the importance of the City. This country isn't *made* or run by New York or its half dozen sisters! It's in the smaller towns, — and spread all over the country, — that you find the bone and sinew of the United States!

GEORGE. But for a young man to make a career for himself — I don't mean in business only, — in politics, in —

RAND. [*Interrupting.*] You don't need the *City!* What's the matter with here?

GEORGE. Look at what Bert Vorhees has done, going to New York! He's going to be District Attorney, they say. And how long has he been there? Five or six years! I had a long talk with Eleanor Vorhees when she was here last month; it's wonderful what Bert's accomplished! And look at Eleanor herself! By George, she's the finest girl I've ever seen!

RAND. Still, did Lincoln need New York? Did Grant? Did a metropolis turn out McKinley, or have anything to do with forming the character and career of Grover Cleveland? You're cheating yourself, if you're honest in your talk with me! All you want of the City is what you can get out of it, — not what you can do for it!

GEORGE. No, you judge from your own point of view! Middleburg makes you look through

the wrong end of the opera-glass. You *can't* judge from *my* point of view.

RAND. When you're *my* age, if you've kept as abreast of the times as I have, you'll be lucky. But if you're in New York, you won't have had time. There, you'll know one thing to perfection — but only one — where your interests are centred! All city men specialize — they have to *get* success, and *keep* it! Every walk in life, there, is a marathon! But the worst of it is, the goal isn't stationary. It's like the horizon, — no man can reach it!

GEORGE. But why blame the City?

RAND. Because the City turns ambition into selfish greed! There, no matter what you get, you want more! And when you've got more, at God knows what price sometimes, it's not enough! There's no such thing as being satis-

fied! First, you want to catch up with your neighbor; then you want to pass him; and then you die disappointed if you haven't left him out of sight!

MRS. RAND. I'm afraid your father's determined. And forty years with him has taught me two things, — first, when he *is* determined, you might just as well realize it in the beginning; and second, in the end you're sure to *be glad he was!*

RAND. Thank you, Molly. And I was never more determined than I am this time.

MRS. RAND. [*With a sigh of half-amused resignation.*] Then I'll go and put on the dress I got in New York, which the dressmaker said I'd made her spoil in order that my neighbors at home shouldn't say I'd gone out of my senses.

[*She exits.*

GEORGE. Well, father, if *you* won't leave, let me go away! Let me go to the City on my own account. Bert Vorhees has been urging me to come for over a year. He says politics in the City are crying for just such new, clean men as me. He wants me to help *him;* that, in itself, is a big opening. I won't ask for any help from you. Just let me go, as *your father* let *you* go, to work out, myself, my own salvation!

RAND. Your own damnation it would be! No, sir, you stay here as long as I live and have any power over or influence with you.

GEORGE. Suppose *I'm* stubborn as *you* are, and go, even if it has to be against your will.

RAND. Look here, boy! You're trained in my methods, for my job. Those methods are all right for Middleburg, where I'm known and

respected. No one has been to this town more, in a civic way, than I have. The Park Street Congregational Church couldn't have been built, nor halfway supported as it has been, without my help; and I could go on for some length, if I liked, in much the same sort of strain. What *I* do in this town is *right*. But the public libraries of Middleburg wouldn't help me in the City, nor the Park Street Church be a sufficient guarantee for my banking methods, to let me risk myself in the hornet's nest New York is at present.

GEORGE. [*Almost laughing at the idea.*] You don't mean you would be afraid of any investigation —?

RAND. *Here*, no! I've always kept to the right side of the line, but I've kept very close, and the line may be *drawn* differently here. My

conscience is clear, George, but my common sense is a good watch-dog.

[*The* MAIDSERVANT *enters.*

MAIDSERVANT. Here's a man says he has an appointment with you, sir.

RAND. [*Startled and a little angry.*] *No one* has an appointment with me!

MAIDSERVANT. Well, I didn't know!

[*Enter* HANNOCK, *during the speech. The* MAIDSERVANT *looks a little alarmed at what she has done, as she goes out.*

HANNOCK. [*Very hard.*] I told you, in the letter I sent here to-day, I was going to call this afternoon.

RAND. I destroyed that letter without reading it, — as I have the last half dozen you've sent me.

HANNOCK. That's what made it necessary for me to call in person!

[GEORGE *looks from one to the other, dumfounded.*

GEORGE. Father?

RAND. [*To* HANNOCK, *referring to* GEORGE.] This is my son. I'm glad he is here, to be a witness. Go ahead! I take it, as you seem to be *in the business*, you've made yourself acquainted with the *law of blackmail!*

HANNOCK. I know what you've already told me — but I don't give a damn! I've got nothing to lose, and nothing to get, except money, from you. *You won't jail me*, anyway, for you know a trial here would ruin *you*, no matter what happened to me!

GEORGE. Here, you —!

RAND. [*Taking a step forward.*] No, George! Keep your temper. This man says I ruined his mother — [*In great shame and emotion.*

GEORGE. [*To* HANNOCK.] You *liar!*

HANNOCK. Then why did he give her a regular allowance till she died? and why did he keep on giving to me? — for a while!

RAND. George, I feel badly. Get me some whiskey and water. [GEORGE *hurries out.* RAND, *in rising anger:*] I kept on giving to you, till I found out you were a sot and a degenerate blackguard — a drug fiend and a moral criminal. I kept on helping you after three houses of correction had handled you, and one prison! *Then I stopped!* What was the use, — money was only helping you on!

HANNOCK. Still, for my mother's sake, you can't let me *starve!* You oughtn't to have torn up those letters; then you'd have had the blackmail in writing. I told you, if you didn't give me what I want, I'd print your letters to my

mother right here in this town. The anti-saloon paper, that hates you for not joining its movement, would be glad to get them and show you up for a God damn whited sepulchre!

RAND. [*Quiet, controlling himself by a terrific effort.*] And suppose that didn't frighten me!

HANNOCK. I've just got on to something bigger yet, I can use by way of a lever! The two years you had me working in the bank, I kept my eyes open. If it hadn't been for the yellow streak in me, I guess I'd have made a banker, all right. I liked it, and I seem to catch on to things sorter by instinct. You were the *big thing*, and I watched and studied your methods to make 'em mine!

RAND. Well?

HANNOCK. Yes! "Well," by God! I guess you realize just as plain as I do that those very

methods in New York, that have been raising hell with the insurance companies and all sorts of corporations, aren't a patch on some of *your deals* I know of! And I tell you, if there should be a State investigation in Middleburg, you'd go under as sure as I stand here; and if I had to go to prison, I'd stand a sure chance of passing you in the yard some day — wearing the same old stripes yourself.

RAND. [*In a paroxysm of rage.*] It's a lie! It's a lie! Just to get money out of me! I told you, before you began, you'd come to blackmail!

[*He chokes.*

HANNOCK. Well, you know how to prove it! Have me arrested; charge me with it; and *let the whole thing be thrashed out!* [*A second's pause.*] Aw — you don't dare. You know you don't!

[*Enter* CICELY, *looking girlishly lovely in a fresh white dress and corn-colored sash.*

CICELY. Father, aren't you going to dress — and help us?

[HANNOCK *looks at* CICELY, *admiring her.*

RAND. Excuse me, Cicely, I'm engaged just now.

CICELY. I beg your pardon.

[*She goes out.*

HANNOCK. [*Following her with his eyes.*] She's growing into a lovely girl, your daughter! It would be a pity —

[*He speaks in broken sentences.*

RAND. [*Giving in.*] How much do you want?

HANNOCK. I want two thousand dollars.

RAND. For how long?

HANNOCK. *For as long as it lasts!*

RAND. [*With a reaction.*] No, I won't do it!

You'll gamble, or squander this in some low way, and be back before the week's out! What's the use! I can't keep this up for ever!

HANNOCK. [*Bringing a pistol out of his pocket, quickly.*] Do you see that?

[*He puts it on the desk.*

RAND. [*Greatly frightened.*] Good God!

HANNOCK. Don't be frightened! It's not for *you*. I'm no murderer! It's for myself.

RAND. [*Suffering from shock.*] How do you mean?

HANNOCK. [*Taking up the pistol, and handling it almost affectionately.*] I'm never without it. And when I can't get anything more out of you, when I'm clean empty, — not a crust, or drink, or drug to be had, — then I'll take this friend to my heart, so —

[*Placing pistol over his heart.*

RAND. [*Frightened, calls feebly:*] George!

HANNOCK. Oh, not yet! [*Taking pistol from his chest.*] I'm not ready yet. But remember, when you've signed your last check for me, *you will be responsible for this.*

[*He touches the pistol; then hides it quickly in his pocket, as* GEORGE *enters with whiskey and water.*

GEORGE. I'm sorry to take so long, but I had to persuade mother not to come with me, when she heard you were faint. And I thought you wouldn't want —

RAND. Yes, quite right —

[*He drinks, excitedly, tremblingly, feebly.*

GEORGE. [*To* HANNOCK.] You can see my father is ill; surely, ordinary human feeling will make you realize to-day is no time for you to —

RAND. [*Interrupting.*] It's all right, George. Hannock and I have had it out while you were gone. [*Writing a check.*] We understand each other now!

HANNOCK. I've made my position quite clear to your father.

RAND. [*Giving* HANNOCK *the check.*] Here — and for God's sake try to behave yourself! [*Looking at him intently, with a strange, almost yearning look, as if he really cared whether* HANNOCK *behaved himself or not.*] *Try* to do right!

HANNOCK. Thanks for your advice *and money!* [*To* GEORGE.] Good-by!

RAND. Good-by!

[GEORGE *only nods his head, looking at* HANNOCK *with unconcealed dislike.* HANNOCK *goes out.* RAND *sinks on his arms, his head falling on the table.* GEORGE *goes to him in alarm.*

GEORGE. Father!

RAND. I'm not well. I've felt dizzy all day. It was more than I could stand!

GEORGE. I don't approve of your giving him money! Till you once take a firm stand, there'll never be any let up.

RAND. But I owe it to him, George! I owe it to him.

GEORGE. Nonsense! What sort of a woman was his mother?

RAND. She was a dressmaker in East Middleburg; hadn't a very good reputation. I doubt very much if what he says is *true.*

GEORGE. *Well then?*

RAND. Yes, but more than he knows *is true!* — and worse!

GEORGE. How do you mean?

RAND. Yes, the whole thing is more than I

can carry any longer! I'm too old! Your younger shoulders must help me bear it, George. It breaks my heart to tell you, and shames me, George, but I must unburden myself. Besides, I need help — I need advice! And besides, you'll see how you can't go away and leave me alone here! [*He rises in fear and excitement.*] I'm your father, and you've got to stand by me and help me! I can't stand alone any longer!

GEORGE. Father!

[*He goes to him.*

RAND. Promise me, George, promise me you won't leave me here! You'll stand by me!

GEORGE. Yes, father, *I promise you!*

RAND. [*Sinks back exhausted into his chair. A second's pause.*] That man who just left here don't know it, but —

[*He stops from dread and shame of finishing.*

GEORGE. But what?

RAND. I'm his father!

GEORGE. [*Astounded.*] That *fellow's?*

RAND. *That* fellow's!

GEORGE. *Then of course he knows it!*

RAND. No, it would be a stronger lever for money than any he has used, and he doesn't hesitate to use the strongest he can find — or *invent!* In return for the financial arrangement I made with her, his mother swore he should never know. As a matter of fact, she was anxious, for her own sake, to keep it quiet. She moved to Massachusetts, passed herself off as a widow, and married a man named Hannock, there; but he died, and so back she came, passing off this boy, *here*, as Hannock's son! [*He groans.*] What a story for a father to own up to, before a son like you. [*After a second's pause.*

GEORGE. Don't think of that! *Don't mind me!* After all, I'm a twentieth century *son*, you know, and *New York at heart!*

RAND. Of course your mother's never dreamed. *That* I couldn't bear —

GEORGE. That's right. Mother's not me, — she's *nineteenth century* and Middleburg!

RAND. Now, you see I do owe this young man something. I can't shut my eyes to it!

GEORGE. Yes. I'm even wondering, father, if you don't owe him — the *truth!*

RAND. No, no, I couldn't trust him with it!

GEORGE. *Still*, father, don't *you owe it to him?* Even more than money! And don't you suppose he suspects it, anyway?

RAND. No, and he *mustn't know.* He'd tell *everybody!* It would be my ruin; and your mother? — break her heart, — and for what good?

GEORGE. [*With a sudden idea.*] Father, why not come to the City and escape him?

RAND. Escape him! He'd follow! That's his hunting ground! When you came back home from college, I'd had him in the bank a couple of years. But I didn't want you two to meet, so I got him a good place in Boston. But in six months he'd lost it, and was mixed up in some scrape in New York! No! Remember, George, you gave me your promise you wouldn't leave me! You'll stay with me here. We must take care of this man, of course, for our own sakes, as well as his. I am his father!

GEORGE. And I'm his brother, and Cicely and Tess are his sisters! It's hard lines on him! I can't help feeling, father, we owe him a good deal.

RAND. You'll stand by me — so long as I live. [*Excitedly.*] Promise me solemnly!

GEORGE. I have promised you, father.

RAND. And, if anything should ever happen to *me*, you'd look after — Hannock, wouldn't you, George?

GEORGE. Yes, father. I consider you — we — owe Hannock a future!

RAND. But you'll keep my secret — promise me that, too!

GEORGE. I give you my word of honor, father.

RAND. [*Half collapses and sways.*] I feel so badly again! I — I'm going to my room to lie down. Don't let them disturb me till supper-time. [GEORGE *goes to help him out.* RAND *smiles, though with an effort.*] No, no! I'm not so far gone as all that, — not yet a while, boy, not quite yet —! [*Goes out alone.*

GEORGE. [*Coming back.*] Who'd *have thought it! Who'd have thought it! Father!*

[*A heavy fall is heard in the hall outside.* GEORGE *looks up, and then starts on, but stops and lifts his head suddenly to listen. A look of fright and dread is on his face. Then he turns to the door and walks into the hall. A moment after, off stage, he cries,* "Father!"

[*The following scene takes place off stage.*

MRS. RAND. [*In a voice of excitement.*] What was it? Father? Did he faint? [*Calling.*] James! *James,* bring me water, *quick!*

GEORGE. I'll telephone for the doctor. I'll get Dr. Hull from across the street. He'll be the quickest. [*Passes by the door from Left to Right. The telephone bell is heard. The* MAIDSERVANT *hurries past the door with water.*] Hello. Give me sixteen —

MRS. RAND. [*To* MAIDSERVANT.] Is John in the kitchen having his supper?

MAIDSERVANT. Yes, ma'am.

GEORGE. Hello?

MRS. RAND. Tell him to come here to help us carry Mr. Rand into the parlor, and you come right back.

MAIDSERVANT. Yes, ma'am.

[*She again goes hurriedly past the door from Left to Right, as* GEORGE *is talking.*

GEORGE. [*At 'phone, off stage.*] Is that you, Dr. Hull? Can you come right over? Father — looks to me like a stroke! Good-by.

[*Rings telephone bell, and passes before the door on his way from Right to Left.*

MRS. RAND. I've sent for John. I thought between us we could carry him. [MAIDSERVANT *passes through hall from Right to Left.*] Susan, get a pillow from upstairs, and put it on the sofa in the parlor, and send Miss Cicely.

MAIDSERVANT. Yes, ma'am.

[*Before doorway,* JOHN *passes from Right to Left.*

GEORGE. Here, John! Father's very ill. John, we want to get him on to the sofa in the parlor.

CICELY. What's the matter? What is it, mother?

MRS. RAND. We don't know ourselves, dear, but we're waiting for Dr. Hull.

GEORGE. You hold his head up, mother. And John — that's right!

MRS. RAND. Give me the pillow, Susan, — help me.

GEORGE. Cicely, go into the library, close the door, and wait for me. As soon as the doctor comes — [*Front doorbell rings outside.*

MRS. RAND. There he is! Susan, go to the door.

[*Enter* CICELY. *She closes the door behind her, frightened, and leans against it, listening.*

CICELY. [*Whispers.*] He's dead, — I know it, — he's *dead!* [*She carefully opens the door on a crack to listen. She sees* MAIDSERVANT.] Susan! [MAIDSERVANT *approaches in the hall beyond the half open door.*] Was it the doctor?

MAIDSERVANT. [*In doorway.*] Yes, Miss.

CICELY. What did he say?

MAIDSERVANT. I don't know, Miss. I didn't go in the room.

JOHN. [*Appearing in the hall.*] Susan!

[*Whispers.*

CICELY. What is it, John? What does the doctor say?

JOHN. [*Embarrassed.*] I — I — don't know, Miss. Mr. George'll tell you. He wants you, Susan, to telephone to his aunt, Mrs. Loring,

and ask her to have word 'phoned round to the guests for this afternoon not to come. You're to say Mr. Rand has been taken suddenly ill, and will she come over at once.

MAIDSERVANT. All right.

[*She goes.*

CICELY. Poor papa! He isn't dead, then?

[SUSAN *is heard ringing the 'phone.*

JOHN. Mr. George'll tell you.

[*He goes off.*

MAIDSERVANT. Hello! Give me thirty-one, please.

[GEORGE *comes into the room to* CICELY.

CICELY. How is he?

GEORGE. Cicely!

CICELY. [*Frightened.*] What?

MAIDSERVANT. [*Heard outside.*] Is that Mrs. Loring, please — this is Susan —

[GEORGE *shuts the hall door; he puts his arm around* CICELY.

GEORGE. Cicely, father's dead.

CICELY. Oh, George! [*Bursts into tears.*

GEORGE. [*Putting his arms around her again.*] Cicely, dear, don't cry, little girl! Go upstairs to mother; she wants you. And stay with her till Aunt Nellie comes —

CICELY. [*Crying.*] Oh, poor mother, poor mother!

[CICELY *goes out, leaving door open.*

MAIDSERVANT. [*Off stage at the telephone.*] Yes, ma'am. Good-by.

GEORGE. Susan?

MAIDSERVANT. [*In the doorway.*] Yes, sir?

GEORGE. If any strangers come to the door to ask questions, tell them nothing. Do you know Mr. Straker?

MAIDSERVANT. No, sir.

GEORGE. Well, he's on the evening newspaper here. He's sure to hear we've put off our little party, and come around to find out. If any one asks, never mind who, — you know nothing except that Mr. Rand was taken suddenly sick. That's all. You don't know how, or what it is. You understand?

MAIDSERVANT. Yes, sir.

GEORGE. All right. [*Nods to her to go. She goes out. He walks over to the desk and looks where his father sat and stood.*] Why, it was only a minute ago he was there, talking with me! It doesn't seem possible — that now — he's dead — dead — [*he wipes the tears out of his eyes, and gives a long sigh; sinks in the seat*] gone for good out of this life! I don't understand it! What does it all mean? [*He is star-*

ing straight ahead of him. Suddenly a thought comes to him and takes possession of him.] I know one thing it *means for me!* — [*He rises and stands straight.*] It means *New York.* [*There is a tapping on the glass of the window. He doesn't hear it at first. It is* TERESA, *outside, tapping. She taps again. He looks up and sees her.*] Tess!! [*He hurries to the window and opens it.*] Tess!

[*Embraces her enthusiastically.*

TERESA. I thought I'd stroll in and surprise you! It's the same old room! — [*smiling around, as she recognizes things*] not a thing changed! — nor in the town, either, from the smelly old barn of a depot — past the same gay houses with the empty old iron urns, right up to *ours*, — bigger and uglier than all the rest! Nothing's changed! And oh, George, how can I live here?

I'll never be able to stand it! I can't do it! I know I can't do it!

[*Kisses him again.*

GEORGE. Tess! You won't have to! We're going to live in New York!

TERESA. George!! What do you mean?

GEORGE. We're going to live in the City!

TERESA. Oh, George! You don't know how much that means to me! I can be married in New York, then!

GEORGE. [*Amazed.*] Married!

TERESA. Sh! That's my surprise! Heavens, how hard it's been to keep it out of my letters! I met him first in Egypt, and then he joined us at Nice, at Paris, and in London, and *there* he proposed.

GEORGE. But who?

TERESA. I just told you!

GEORGE. [*Smiling.*] No, you didn't!

TERESA. Oh! Donald Van Vranken.

GEORGE. Don Van Vranken?

TERESA. Yes! Think what my position will be in New York!

GEORGE. But Tess! He's the fastest fellow going! He's notorious! Look at the scandals that have been more or less public property about him. It's the last one that drove him abroad, afraid of the witness bench!

TERESA. Oh, you can't believe everything you hear! He's a handsome darling, and I love him, and he loves me, — so don't worry!

GEORGE. But I can't help worrying! Your happiness isn't safe with a man like Don Van Vranken.

TERESA. Oh, come, you haven't been away from Middleburg enough! Here, *maybe*, the

husbands do go to the altar like Easter lilies! But in the City, you don't marry a man for what he has or hasn't been; you marry him for what he is and what you hope he's going to be! But I did dread a wedding here — with his people and friends! How in the world did you *persuade father?*

[*A second's pause, as* GEORGE *suddenly comes back with a terrific shock.*

GEORGE. Good God! I forgot! I've some awful news!

TERESA. Mother —!

GEORGE. No, — father.

TERESA. What? — not —?

GEORGE. Yes. To-day, — just a little while ago! Suddenly — in a second! His heart gave out — I was talking with him two minutes before.

TERESA. Oh, poor mother! Where is she? Let me go to her!

GEORGE. She's up in her room.

TERESA. Mother! — [*As she goes out in great distress, she is heard again in the distance.*] Mother!!

GEORGE. [*Stands where she left him — alone — his head bowed. He straightens up, and lifts his head; and his face flushes with the uncontrolled impulses of youth and ambition. With a voice of suppressed excitement, full of emotion, and with a trembling ring of triumph, he says:*] The CITY . . . !

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT II

SCENE: *Several years later. The library in the* RANDS' *house in New York. The walls are panelled in light walnut. Two French windows, with the sun shining in, are on the Left. There are small doors, Right and Left Centre, opening into other rooms. Between the bookcases, which occupy most of the wall space, are marble busts, standing in deep niches. There are flowers about. The sofa, chairs, hangings, and cushions are of golden yellow brocade, except one big armchair, upholstered in red, standing in front of the open wood fire. A Sargent portrait is built in over the mantel. A small typewriting table is at one side. Almost in*

the centre of the room, with chairs grouped near it, is a long carved table, with all the desk fittings of a luxurious but busy man; there is also a bunch of violets on it, in a silver goblet — and at present it is strewn with papers, etc.

FOOT *is arranging the fire. There is a knock at the door.* HANNOCK *enters. He comes in, in evident and only partly suppressed, nervous excitement. He wears a white flower in his buttonhole.*

HANNOCK. Hello, Foot. Is Mr. Rand out?

FOOT. Yes, sir.

[*Rises, having finished the fire.*

HANNOCK. He left no message for me?

FOOT. Yes, sir. He left some papers on the desk, which he said he'd like you to go over carefully, at once, and two letters he wanted you to answer.

HANNOCK. All right. Get me a package of

longish papers, with an elastic band around them, in my overcoat in the hall.

FOOT. Yes, sir.

HANNOCK. Has the stenographer been here?

FOOT. Yes, but he's gone; said he couldn't wait any longer, as he has an appointment.

HANNOCK. [*Angry; making nervous, irritable movements.*] He'll be sorry! I'll see to it he loses Mr. Rand's job, that's all, if he don't knuckle down to me!

FOOT. Yes, sir. It's none of my business, but Mr. Rand didn't like your being late. He said you knew it was an important day for him, and he couldn't understand it.

HANNOCK. He'll understand all right when I explain! It's an *important day* for *me* too!

FOOT. [*Eagerly.*] Is he going to get the nomination for governor, sir?

HANNOCK. Nothing surer! — except his election. That'll be a knockout, and then you'll see us both forging ahead.

FOOT. I'm sure I wish you luck, sir.

HANNOCK. Thanks! Oh, yes, I shall tie my fortune up to Mr. Rand's!

FOOT. Yes, sir —

[*He goes out.*

HANNOCK. Yes, sir, [*imitating* FOOT] — *damned "important"* day for me, too! Phew! [*A great sigh, showing he is carrying something big on his mind.*] I wonder just how he'll take it? I wish it was over.

[*He goes to the typewriting table, rummages in a drawer, takes out a little box, containing a hypodermic needle, and tries it; then, putting it to his arm just above the wrist, he presses it, half grinning and mumbling to himself, —*

looking furtively over his shoulder, fearing an interruption. Just as he finishes, the door opens. CICELY *half comes in. She is in hat, gloves, etc.*

CICELY. [*Half whispering.*] You're back first. [*He nods, hiding the hypodermic needle.*] I've just this minute come in, and I didn't meet a soul. I've sent for Eleanor Vorhees — she's the best.

[*Enter* TERESA *hurriedly, in great and angry emotional excitement, pushing past* CICELY.

TERESA. Good morning, Cicely. Where's George?

CICELY. Give it up!

[*Following her in.*

HANNOCK. He'll be in soon, Mrs. Van Vranken. He's an appointment with Mr. Vorhees.

[*Enter* FOOT.

FOOT. I can't find any papers with an elastic band, sir.

HANNOCK. [*Irritated.*] Oh, well, perhaps there wasn't a band! Use your *common sense!* I'll look myself. [*To the ladies.*] Excuse me.

[*Goes out, followed by* FOOT.

CICELY. What's the matter with you, Tess? Don on the loose again?

TERESA. I don't know and I don't care! I've *left* him.

CICELY. *Left your husband!* — for good? Honest? Or has *he* left you?

TERESA. What do you mean by that? That's a nice thing for my sister to say!

CICELY. My dear! — even donkeys — I mean sisters — have ears, — and you must know how every one has been talking about you and Jimmy Cairns!

TERESA. Well, if I can't depend upon my own family, I don't suppose I can expect my husband to protect me.

CICELY. After all, what can Don say? He can't find any fault with *you!*

TERESA. Exactly! — and I went to him, perfectly calm and reasonable, and said very sweetly: "Don, I'm going to divorce you. We needn't have any disagreeable feeling about it, or any scandal. I will simply bring the divorce, mentioning this woman" —

CICELY. Mrs. Judly?

TERESA. Of course — but doing it as quietly as possible, behind closed doors, or with sealed papers, or whatever they call it. Only, of course he must give me the children!

CICELY. Oh! — and he refused?

TERESA. *Absolutely refuses*, — and to let me get

the divorce as I propose! He will only agree to a legal separation, the children's time to be divided between us. That's all he'll stand for.

CICELY. Let him agree to what he likes! You've got your case, all right. You could prove everything you want to, couldn't you?

TERESA. [*Getting angry.*] Yes, but he — Oh, the beast! — he dares to *threaten!* If I attempt to do this, he'll bring a counter suit, mentioning Mr. Cairns!

CICELY. Tess!

TERESA. You see! He ties my hands!

CICELY. But not if he couldn't —

TERESA. Sh-h! Let's talk about something else. I don't want that horrid Hannock to know anything. I despise him!

CICELY. [*On the defensive.*] I don't know why!

TERESA. Well, I'm not alone in my feelings. I don't know any one who *likes* him.

CICELY. Yes, you do, because *I'm* one.

TERESA. He always affects me like a person who would listen at keyholes!

CICELY. Some day you'll be very sorry you said that. [HANNOCK *reënters.*

HANNOCK. Mr. Vorhees is here with Miss Vorhees.

CICELY. I asked Eleanor to come.

[*She goes out to greet them.*

TERESA. [*To* HANNOCK.] Let me know the minute Mr. Rand comes in.

[*She goes out.* HANNOCK *takes up letters on desk which are for him to answer, goes to the typewriting table, and sits down to write, reading over to himself one of the letters — mumbling the words. He laughs to himself.*

HANNOCK. Ha! And I suppose he thinks this is legitimate business! — that *this sort of a deal* goes hand in hand with his "clean record," with his "white politics," with the Vorhees "good government." Humph! "Teddy, Jr." is a good nickname for him, — I guess not! The *public* would put George Rand in the Roosevelt class with a vengeance, wouldn't they! — if they were on to this one piece of manipulation! Following in father's footsteps, all right, and going popper one better! That's what! And he *pretends* to think his methods are on the level! All the same, I guess he is just as square as the rest of 'em. You can't tell me Vorhees isn't feathering *his nest* good! You bet *I'm* on to Vorhees! [*He looks up, half startled.*] Damn it, when am I going to stop talking in my sleep when I'm wide awake? [*Looking at the place*

on his arm, and smoothing it over.] Too much of the needle, I guess!

[*Enter* SERVANT *with* VORHEES. SERVANT *goes out.*

VORHEES. Good morning, Hannock.

HANNOCK. Good morning, Mr. Vorhees. You're ten minutes early for your appointment, sir.

VORHEES. Mr. Rand is generally ready ahead of time. I thought I'd probably find him.

HANNOCK. He isn't here yet. I *hope* he gets the nomination for governor!

VORHEES. Well, I'm inclined to think it's all *up to him* now, Hannock, and that to-day will decide.

HANNOCK. Isn't it wonderful how far he's got in barely five years!

VORHEES. Well, it was Rand's good luck —

to come along at the right psychological moment — the party tired of the political gambler, the manipulator. We wanted a candidate with just the freshness, the force and stability of a *small town's bringing up*. The whole of Middleburg, no matter what the party, will come forward unanimously, and speak for their young fellow townsman. His family is the boast of the place! His father's name stands for everything that's best and finest in public and private life, and, when George took hold in New York, with all the political vitality and straightforward vigor of his blood and bringing up, and not only helped along *our reforms*, but *created new ones of his own*, giving his time and his strength and his money to the public good! Well, you know what the man in the street's been calling him for a year now?

HANNOCK. [*With a covert sneer.*] "*Teddy, Jr.!*"

VORHEES. Yes, "Teddy, Jr." That idea ought to land him in Albany, all right!

HANNOCK. [*With the bare suggestion of a bully's manner.*] I hope, Mr. Vorhees, I haven't been altogether overlooked in all the enthusiasm.

VORHEES. [*With a big drop.*] How do you mean?

HANNOCK. Well, I've been George Rand's right hand, you know! I've done my share of the work. Where do *I* come in on the *reward* end?

VORHEES. [*Strongly.*] I *really* don't understand you.

HANNOCK. [*Smiling, but serious and determined, and speaking deliberately.*] *What do I get out of it?*

VORHEES. [*After a pause.*] You get a damned

lot of pride in the man you've had the honor of serving, that's what you get!

HANNOCK. [*Angry at the snub, and suspicious that he is to be thrown down.*] And a hell of a lot of good that'd do me! Look here, Mr. Vorhees, I might as well have my say out now! If George Rand wants to be elected Governor of New York, he and his electors have got to square me!

VORHEES. Why, you talk like a fool — or a scoundrel!

HANNOCK. Well, never mind what I talk *like;* I know what I'm talking *about*, and I say there's something good in the way of a job coming to his confidential secretary out of "*Gov.*" *Rand's* election!

[VORHEES *half laughs, half sneers, but still is slightly disturbed.* GEORGE *enters.*

GEORGE. Hello! Am I late? Sorry!

VORHEES. No, I'm early. Well!! Can we have our talk?

GEORGE. [*Smiling at himself.*] I believe I'm nervous! Go ahead! Fire your first gun!

[*Takes a chair.* HANNOCK *also sits.*

VORHEES. [*With a glance toward* HANNOCK.] I'll wait, if you have any business to discuss with Mr. Hannock.

GEORGE. No, nothing in a hurry; that's all right, go on —

VORHEES. Well, if you don't mind, I'd like to talk with *you privately.*

GEORGE. Certainly. Would you mind, Hannock, waiting in —

VORHEES. [*Interrupting; to* HANNOCK.] Eleanor's in the drawing-room. Cicely sent for her; wants her advice, I believe, about something or other, *very important!*

[*Guying the latter with a smile.*

GEORGE. Well, suppose you go to my room, Hannock, and use the desk there.

HANNOCK. [*In a hard voice, reluctant to leave them.*] Very good.

[*Rises, takes papers, and starts to go.*

VORHEES. [*With the tone of a final good-by.*] Good morning, Hannock.

HANNOCK. Good morning, sir. [*Stops at the door.*] If I wanted to speak with you later on to-day, after I've had a talk with Mr. Rand, could I call you up on the 'phone, and make an appointment?

VORHEES. Certainly.

HANNOCK. [*In a satisfied voice.*] Thank you.

[*Goes out.*

GEORGE. Well?

VORHEES. How do you *feel?* Eager, eh?

GEORGE. That depends on what I'm going to

get! I'm eager, all right, if you've come to tell me what I want to hear!!

VORHEES. You're *warm*, as the children say!

GEORGE. What wouldn't I give — that was honest to give — for this chance, not just to *talk*, not to *boast*, not to *promise*, only —

VORHEES. [*Interrupting him.*] Exactly! That's exactly what we want — the man behind the gun in *front of the gun!* We don't want a Fourth of July orator *only*, in the Capitol! We want a man who'll be *doing something*, George!

GEORGE. [*Enthusiastically.*] Every minute!!

VORHEES. We can hire a human phonograph to do the talking. The party's full of them!

GEORGE. I want to make *my name mean*, in this *whole country*, what *father's* meant in *that small, up-State town we came from!!*

VORHEES. Your name can take care of itself.

Don't think of any glory *you're* going to get! You'll get most by keeping busy for the good of the State, for the welfare of the people —

GEORGE. [*Eagerly, not waiting for* VORHEES *to finish.*] I know! But I'm going to show the gods and the demigods, the rabble and the riff-raff, that one good lesson we've learned from the success of the last administration is that the real leader of a party must be its independent choice, and not its tool.

VORHEES. [*Approving.*] Right!

GEORGE. Machine politics are a *back number.* The public has got on to the engine, and smashed the works!

VORHEES. Man is greater than a machine, because God's soul is in him.

GEORGE. Yes, and what I'm going to show is that the soul of a political party is the uncompromising honesty of its leader.

VORHEES. Don't always be emphasizing the leader; — let it go at the *party's* honesty! You're inclined, George, to over-emphasize the personal side of it! It's E Pluribus *Unum*, not E Pluribus *me*-um!

GEORGE. All right, all right! Only, don't forget that I've got an inordinate ambition, and you're dangling in front of my eyes the talisman that may land me, God knows how high!

VORHEES. Well, come back to earth! Now, I've come here with the nomination in one hand —

[GEORGE *draws a long, excited breath.*

GEORGE. And a *string* in the other?

VORHEES. Yes.

GEORGE. Well, give it to us!

VORHEES. The Committee decided it was up to me! I've known you as a boy. You're going to marry my sister. We're brothers practically.

I can speak frankly, without giving any offence — that's sure, isn't it?

GEORGE. Nothing surer!

VORHEES. It's just this! Of course the minute you're nominated, our political opponents will get busy! The muckrakes are all ready!

GEORGE. You bet they are, and the searchlights haven't any Foolish Virgins in charge of them. They're trimmed, all right, and filled with *gasoline!*

VORHEES. [*Very seriously.*] You can stand it, George?

GEORGE. I can.

VORHEES. You've got a wonderful popularity, and the Committee believes in you, but it wants your word confirming its confidences, — that's all.

GEORGE. That's the least it can ask.

VORHEES. Is there anything in your life that

isn't absolutely above board, George? No skeleton in your heart, or your *cupboard?* It's safe for us to put you up? You're sure not a particle of the mud they'll rake can stick?

GEORGE. Not a particle.

VORHEES. Look back a little. Sometimes I think you're a little *too* cocksure of yourself. No man can be, absolutely, till he's been tried in the furnace, and you haven't been, yet. But we're getting the fires ready! [*Smiles.*] You're all right at heart, I'm sure of it. Nobody in this world believes more in you than *I* do,—[*again smiling*] except, perhaps, you yourself. But there's nothing, nothing that could be ferreted out? You know they'll dig, and dig, and dig!!

GEORGE. But I give you my word of honor, so help me God, I've never done a dishonest or dishonorable act, or an act—

VORHEES. [*Interrupting.*] In business?

GEORGE. [*Hesitates just one moment.*] You know what my father stood for, — and my business methods *he* taught me. I've gone ahead of him, of course, — gone on with the times, — but on the road father blazed for me! I've not deviated from a single principle.

VORHEES. Good! I know what George Rand, Sr., stood for in Middleburg! That's good enough for me. And in your private life? Oh, this is just going through the form; personally, I'd stake my life on your answer, and Eleanor's instinct would have kept her from loving you.

GEORGE. I was brought up in a small town, in the old-fashioned family life that's almost ancient history in the bigger cities. I loved my father and my mother, and their affection meant everything to me. From their influence, I went

under Eleanor's. You needn't have one worry about my private life.

VORHEES. Of course I knew you were clean and above board, but different men have different ideas about some things.

GEORGE. Listen, — I'm no little tin god! I'm as full of faults as the next man, but I'm not afraid to own up my mistakes; I'm not afraid to tell the truth to my own disadvantage; I'm not afraid to stand or fall by my sincere conviction! In a word, I'm game to be put to any test you or the party want to put me, and I'll stand straight as I know how, so long as there's a drop or a breath of life left in me!

VORHEES. Then that's all! And unofficially — *unofficially* — I can tell you, barring the unexpected accident, the nomination is yours!

[*Holding out his hand, he grips* GEORGE'S *in his.*

GEORGE. *Isn't it great? It's wonderful!* Oh, God, if *I can only do it big!*

VORHEES. You mean *do it well!*

GEORGE. [*Taken aback only for a second.*] Er — yes, of course — same thing! — Do half I dream of and want to!

VORHEES. [*Smiling.*] Well — I'm taking any bets!!

GEORGE. I owe the whole business to you, you know, and *I* know it!

VORHEES. Nonsense! With that overwhelming ambition of yours! Perhaps I taught you your *primer* of politics, your *grammar* of public life; that's all — except that I'm a *damned proud* teacher!!!

[*Enter* FOOT.

FOOT. Mr. Van Vranken must see you at once, sir, — says it's very urgent.

GEORGE. All right.

VORHEES. Say in two or three minutes.

FOOT. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*

VORHEES. There is just one more thing before I can go.

GEORGE. What?

VORHEES. Nothing that really concerns you, though it may cause you some inconvenience. The Committee thinks you'd better get rid of your secretary.

GEORGE. [*Astounded.*] *Hannock?*

VORHEES. Yes, — he's no good!

GEORGE. No good?

VORHEES. A damn rotten specimen. We've found out enough about him to make sure we don't want him mixed up with us in *any way* in the election.

GEORGE. You — you take me off my feet!

VORHEES. If you want more detailed information, ask any detective with tenderloin experience.

GEORGE. I've never liked him. I can't say I've really trusted him. And yet I laid my prejudice to a personal source.

VORHEES. He's dishonest besides. You can't have him in a confidential position. You couldn't help getting tarred with some of his pitch!

GEORGE. But are you sure of what you say?

VORHEES. Sure! Why, just now, here, he showed me the hoof of a blackmailer.

GEORGE. [*Looks up quickly.*] *At that again!*

VORHEES. How do you mean "*again*"?

GEORGE. Explain to *me* what *you* mean.

VORHEES. Oh, he didn't get far — we were interrupted! He put out a feeler, which was

very like a *demand*, as to what he was going to get out of this election.

GEORGE. [*Carelessly, and not very loudly.*] He needn't think I'm *father!*

VORHEES. [*Not understanding.*] What's that?

GEORGE. You leave Hannock to me. I'll take care of *him!*

VORHEES. You'll *discharge* him? [*A pause.*

GEORGE. No, — I can't.

VORHEES. [*Astonished.*] How do you mean, — "can't."

GEORGE. I couldn't turn him out, if he insists on staying.

VORHEES. *Why not?*

GEORGE. [*A short second's pause.*] That I cannot tell you —

VORHEES. Look here, George! What hold has this man got on you?

GEORGE. On me personally, none. But I owe him a certain duty, and in a way he could do harm to —

VORHEES. I thought you said you had no skeleton?

GEORGE. It isn't in *my* closet, but it concerns those that are nearest and dearest to me.

VORHEES. Then you must risk sacrificing them, if you want the position.

GEORGE. I'd have to sacrifice a memory, too, — and I haven't the right!

VORHEES. If I went to the Committee, and said to them, — Rand refuses to dismiss Hannock; doesn't deny he may be a scoundrel; owns up, in fact, that his family is in some way in the man's power; says he himself is not; but still he doesn't dismiss him, — do you believe for a minute the Committee will go on with your nomination?

GEORGE. No! For God's sake don't tell the Committee anything of the sort! Perhaps I can handle Hannock — beg him off!

VORHEES. I don't like the sound of that. There's one thing about you I'm afraid of, George. You're one of those men who think wrong means are justified by right ends; — unsafe and dishonest policy!

GEORGE. I tell you he can't hurt *me*, George Rand —[*after a second*] "Jr."

VORHEES. That don't do for the Committee. You can't handle mud and not —

GEORGE. [*Interrupting.*] Very well, then if I can't buy him off, I *will* dismiss him! And the others must face the music! There's too much at stake for the future, to over-consider the past.

VORHEES. All right!

[*Enter* VAN VRANKEN, *excited and angry; perhaps he's had a little too much to drink.*

VAN VRANKEN. Look here!

GEORGE. Good morning, Don.

VORHEES. Good morning.

GEORGE. I'm very busy now.

VAN VRANKEN. [*With a jeer.*] I won't interrupt you long!

VORHEES. Would you like *me* to hunt up Eleanor and Cicely, and come back later?

VAN VRANKEN. Oh, you might as well stop. You're as good as in the family, now. You'll be sure to be asked to put *your* oar in!

GEORGE. Sit down, Don, and cool off!

VAN VRANKEN. I haven't time. I'm on the way to my lawyer! I understand my wife's here. Has she talked with you?

GEORGE. No. I've been busy with Vorhees.

VAN VRANKEN. I know — the governorship! Well, your sister'll put a spoke in that wheel, if you don't side with *me!*

GEORGE. What do you mean?

VAN VRANKEN. She threatens to take my children from me by bringing a suit for divorce, — mentioning Nellie Jud — Mrs. Judly.

GEORGE. Well, can you blame her?

VAN VRANKEN. It's a pity you haven't gone out, once in a while, into the society that bores you so, and kept your ears open.

GEORGE. What for?

VAN VRANKEN. You'd have heard a whisper, or caught a look that would have kept you from being surprised at what I'm going to tell you.

GEORGE. What?

VAN VRANKEN. If your sister starts a suit against me, bringing in Nellie's — Mrs. Judly's

— name, I'll bring a *counter suit* against her, naming Jim *Cairns!*

GEORGE. You drunken liar!

[*Going for him.* VORHEES *holds* GEORGE *back.*

VAN VRANKEN. You didn't *know* I could win. I wouldn't put such a stumbling block in the way of my little daughter's happiness!

GEORGE. Liar!!

[*Struggles to free himself.*

VORHEES. No, George! Even *I've* heard enough to wonder something of it hasn't come your way.

VAN VRANKEN. [*Thickly, whiningly.*] All I ask for is a noiseless, dignified separation, — that's all I want, and God, I want that bad! Legal or not, as *she* wishes, — only she's got to agree to cut out Cairns. I give her this chance

for my little daughter's sake, — not for hers! But in another day, maybe, it'll be too late. I get my children six months of the year, and she the other six. I ask no more than I give, — that's fair! I'd like my complete freedom as well as she. So far as love goes, it's a pretty even thing between us! And when the children are grown up, and settled in life, she can do what she damn pleases, and good luck to her!

VORHEES. I've heard the gossip, Van Vranken, but you know enough of our world to realize half that gets about, gets about wrong.

GEORGE. Granted Tess has been *foolish.* That's bad *enough,* God knows! Still — I can't *believe* worse than that! *I grew up with her, — I know her!*

VAN VRANKEN. You knew her before she came to New York. She hadn't developed yet,

in that *mud*hole you all lived in! There's no smoke without —

GEORGE. Yes, there is! There's a smoldering that never breaks into a flame! And you know, Don, you've given every reason for Tess's heart to smolder, yes, and burn, too — though I don't believe it. While we're about it, let's finish the whole ugly business here, now. You're a drunkard, and your best friends are the most depraved crew in town, — a crowd that is used individually as markers to tally off each smart scandal that crops up. It never occurred to you, before you married Tess, that you would be faithful to her afterwards; and you didn't disappoint yourself.

VAN VRANKEN. What right had she to be disappointed? I never made any bluff or pose, and you all fought the match! She married me with her eyes open.

GEORGE. You had the glamour of the City about you. Tess was a *real* woman, full of good and bad; she was ready to be what the man she loved would make of her. And, poor girl, she married *you!*

VORHEES. Well, all that's done. What about the present? Van Vranken is right in saying any divorce scandal would endanger your election. We might lose the entire Catholic vote, and the support of the anti-divorce party, — both of which we're banking on. And besides, one of the strongest planks of our platform is the Sanctity of the Home! We're putting you up as the representative of the great section of the country which stands for the Purity of Family Life. We'd have to drop that platform, or be ridiculed off the face of the earth. And it doesn't seem right in any way to me! And it's not up *to you* to suffer for your sister. [*To* VAN

VRANKEN.] If we persuade Mrs. Van Vranken to a dignified separation such as you want —

VAN VRANKEN. And she gives her promise to call off Cairns —!

GEORGE. [*Quickly.*] Tess will be as anxious to stop gossip, when she hears its extent, as you. I'll take that on *my* shoulders.

[VAN VRANKEN *looks at him, and half smiles cynically at his confidence.*

VORHEES. Very well! Will you, Van Vranken, be willing to hush the whole business up?

VAN VRANKEN. Glad to!

VORHEES. Live on with Mrs. Van Vranken in your house as if nothing had happened?

VAN VRANKEN. No! Not by a damned sight!

VORHEES. Come, don't be a yellow dog! Do all or nothing.

VAN VRANKEN. She left my house of her own

accord, and I've sworn she shall never put her foot in it again.

VORHEES. Oh, well, what's an oath more or less to you! It will be only till after the election! Rand's nomination is practically settled on —

VAN VRANKEN. Oh, I see! Why didn't you say that at first? I've nothing personal against Rand.

VORHEES. I'm sure Mrs. Van Vranken, on her side, will do all she can to protect his interests.

VAN VRANKEN. I suppose I'll have to give in —

VORHEES. *Good!*

GEORGE. I'll see her now, if she's in the house.

VORHEES. [*To* VAN VRANKEN.] I will communicate something to you, after Rand has seen your wife.

VAN VRANKEN. Very good. She took both the children when she left this morning. One child must go back with me now.

VORHEES. *Both must go back*, to-day, and Mrs. Van Vranken, herself, — to live under your roof till after the election.

VAN VRANKEN. That's true! Of course! All right! God, it'll be a *hell* of a life! However, there'll be an end of it to look forward to! Good-by.

VORHEES and GEORGE. Good-by.

[*Enter* TERESA *and* MRS. RAND. MRS. RAND *is very altered. Her hair is dressed fashionably, etc., and, instead of the sweet, motherly woman she was, in Act I, she is now a rather overdressed, nervous-looking woman, ultra-smart, but no longer comfortable-looking and happy.*

TERESA. [*As she enters.*] George!

MRS. RAND. George!

[*They both stop short, as they see* VAN VRANKEN. *He bows to* TERESA; *she only glares at him.*

VAN VRANKEN. [*To* MRS. RAND.] Good morning.

MRS. RAND. [*Looking at him, — outraged and angry.*] You *wicked* man!

[VAN VRANKEN *is somewhat taken aback; from her, he turns and looks at the two men; he raises his eyebrows, smiles, shrugs his shoulders, and slouches out indifferently.*

VORHEES. I must go, too.

TERESA. Good morning, Bert.

VORHEES. Good morning, Tess. How do you do, Mrs. Rand.

MRS. RAND. I don't know where I am, Bert. I never felt the need of Mr. Rand more than to-day!

GEORGE. Bert, will you have to tell the Committee about this? Won't it queer my nomination?

VORHEES. Not if Tess will do what we expect. I'll leave you to explain to her.

[*Moving to go.*

GEORGE. No, — stay, Bert!

MRS. RAND. George! Tess couldn't possibly tell you everything she wants to, before Bert.

TERESA. Oh, don't worry, mother. I guess *Don* hasn't left much for me to tell! Besides, Bert's a lawyer. I'd like his advice. [*To* GEORGE.] Don gave you his version, didn't he?

GEORGE. Listen! My whole future is at stake, and it's in *your* hands!

TERESA. Nonsense! My hands are full of my own troubles.

MRS. RAND. [*To nobody in particular, and nobody pays any attention to her.*] What a tragedy!

VORHEES. George is right. His nomination for governor was decided on, this morning, provided he had an open chance. If you make a scandal now, he'll lose the nomination, sure, — and if not, what's worse, the election!

TERESA. You are trying to influence me against what I want to do, through George. I will never live with Don again!

GEORGE. Won't you? Only till after the election?

TERESA. No! I intend to begin proceedings for a divorce to-day.

GEORGE. But Don *offers* you a legal separation, and to share the children.

TERESA. That's done purposely to keep me

tied, so I couldn't marry again! I want the children all the time, and I want my freedom!

GEORGE. But you know what he threatens to do?

TERESA. *He won't dare!*

VORHEES. That's not his reputation in New York.

MRS. RAND. [*At random.*] If she only wouldn't decide at once — all of a sudden. That's where women always slip up!

TERESA. Did he pretend he wanted me to come back?

GEORGE. [*Smiling in spite of himself.*] No, but we persuaded him to be willing.

VORHEES. For George's sake, till after the election, on one condition —

TERESA. [*Quickly.*] *What* condition?

VORHEES. That you agree to the sort of separation he planned.

GEORGE. And promise to put an end, once for all, to the Cairns gossip.

TERESA. Just what I told you! The whole thing with him is only a mean spirit of revenge! He would sacrifice the children and me and everything else, to keep me from being happy with Jim.

GEORGE. [*Surprised at the apparent confession.*] Do you mean you *do* love Cairns?

TERESA. Yes.

MRS. RAND. [*Breaking in.*] No, she doesn't mean that! She doesn't love him *now*, but she *will*, if she gets her divorce.

GEORGE. [*To* TERESA.] What you really want to divorce Don for, then, is not because of Mrs. Judly, but so you can marry Cairns?

TERESA. Exactly.

VORHEES. [*Looking at his watch.*] I must go. [*To* GEORGE.] The Committee will be waiting now for me.

MRS. RAND. [*Mortified.*] You've shocked Bert, Tess.

VORHEES. [*Smiling.*] Oh, no, I've a report to make before George's nomination can be official, and I don't see, now, just how I'm going to make that report exactly as I wish.

GEORGE. You mean on account of *Tess!*

TERESA. I'll make any sacrifice I can for George, except my own personal happiness. That, I haven't the right to sacrifice, because that belongs half to some one else.

GEORGE. You go on and call me up by telephone when you get there. I'll have had a longer talk with Tess, and I may have something different to say to you.

VORHEES. All right.

[*Going to* TERESA.

TERESA. I shall want you for my lawyer, Bert.

VORHEES. Thanks. That isn't exactly in my line, but I hope you won't *need* a lawyer. Do what you can for George, won't you?

TERESA. Of course.

[MRS. RAND *goes out with* VORHEES.

MRS. RAND. [*As they go out.*] Bert, you mustn't get a wrong impression from what Tess said, will you? She's her father's own daughter, and you know a Rand *couldn't* do a really wrong thing; it's not in the blood.

GEORGE. Now, look here, Tess! On one side is a great career and me, and a dignified life for you, with independence and the happiness and the love and the respect of your children; on the other is probable failure for me, and worse than failure for you. Don'll do what he says, and if he wins his suit, you'll lose *both* children and everything else you ought to care about —

TERESA. Except Jim!

GEORGE. Would he make up for any thing?

TERESA. Everything!

GEORGE. Even the children?

TERESA. [*Almost breaking down.*] How can you say that? You know I wouldn't have to give up my children!

GEORGE. Ten chances to one you'd have to.

TERESA. I don't believe any judge would give *Don* the children in preference to *me*.

GEORGE. Believe me, it'll be taking awful chances.

TERESA. All life is that.

[*She turns aside, crying quietly.*

GEORGE. [*Going over to her.*] Tess! But you don't realize what this nomination means to me — more than anything in the world! I want it with every nerve and sinew in my body,

with every thought in my brain, with every ambition I've got! Just let me get this one big thing in my hands, and nothing *shall stop me!* I'll climb on up the ladder of achievement and fame, and I'll take you all up with me! Remember our boy and girl days, Tess, in Middleburg. We were never selfish, you and I, with each other. It used to be a fight between us as to which should give up! Don't go back on me this time. You've got it in your power to give me a *great boost*, or push the whole scaffolding of my career from under my feet. For the love of God, stand by me to-day!

TERESA. It's your future against my future! Why should you expect me to sacrifice mine for yours? We aren't children now, and this isn't Middleburg! I love you very much, but not in that old-fashioned way.

GEORGE. But has any one in this world the right to absolutely ignore everybody else, and think only of one's self?

TERESA. It sounds to me *exactly* like *what you're doing!*

GEORGE. I suppose I do sound like a selfish brute; but I can't help feeling that what I ask of you, if six for me, is half a dozen for you, too, in the end.

TERESA. If Don'll give me a full divorce, I'll do anything for you — live with the beast *two years*, if necessary, and not see Jim all that time. But don't ask me to give up *Jim* — [*with emotion again*] because I love him, and I won't, I couldn't; if I said I would, I'd lie!

GEORGE. But Don won't give you what you want, and if you insist, he'll do what *he* says — divorce you, with a filthy scandal!

TERESA. The *hour after* the divorce was granted, Jim Cairns and I would be married.

GEORGE. Listen! Would you do *this?* Deceive *me* now?

TERESA. How?

GEORGE. Well — agree to what Don asks —

TERESA. Never!

GEORGE. Wait! After the election, you might change your mind. Whatever course you took then, wouldn't interfere with me.

TERESA. Does that seem to you quite square? Isn't it a good deal like breaking your word?

GEORGE. Has Don done much else beside *break* his since he answered "I will" with you to the Bishop in the chancel?

TERESA. His word was cracked before I knew him! But I wasn't thinking of Don and me,

Aren't you playing a trick on the party that is putting its trust in you?

GEORGE. I don't see it! If your divorce comes out after my election, it needn't affect the party. My acts will be speaking for themselves, then. I intend to be square in office, and to succeed or fail by that standard. I don't mind a failure, *doing* the *right thing;* what I can't stand is failure *doing nothing* with having had my chance!

TERESA. I see; a sort of the-end-justifying-the-means principle.

GEORGE. Not exactly, because I don't see anything wrong. It's just election tactics! The others'd do it; we must fight them with their weapons.

TERESA. [*Rather cunningly.*] Will you tell Bert Vorhees?

GEORGE. [*After a second's pause.*] No.

TERESA. *That's just what I mean!* It's something father wouldn't do.

GEORGE. He *wouldn't!* Why, father's whole business success was due to his not letting his left hand know what his right hand was after, but to square things in the end by a good division! — *one third* to the left hand on the basis that the *right hand* had done *all the work!* And you know what father's name stood for — the very criterion of business honor!

TERESA. Well, George, suppose I do it. I'm in no position to criticise, any way. I'll go back till you're elected, and pretend I'm going to carry out Don's plan.

GEORGE. Thank you, Tess.

[*But the enthusiasm is gone.*

TERESA. Only, somehow it doesn't coincide

with my idea of what I *thought* you were being and striving for. Maybe you're on your way up the ladder, but you, at the same time, are coming down from the pedestal I'd put you on, to join me at the bottom of *mine*.

[*There is a moment's pause, both looking straight ahead, not liking to look into each other's eyes. Enter* HANNOCK.

HANNOCK. Excuse me, Mr. Rand. Mr. Vorhees is on the 'phone.

TERESA. [*Quickly, to* GEORGE.] I'll tell him. Then you won't have to *lie*, if he asks any difficult questions.

GEORGE. I wouldn't lie; I'd just beg anything I don't want to answer — and tell Eleanor to be sure and let me see her before she goes.

TERESA. [*Very serious.*] I wonder if *she'd* approve of this little plot of ours? I wish it didn't seem contemptible to me!

GEORGE. [*Hurt and showing a hint of shame for the first time.*] For God's sake, Tess, don't suggest such a thing! Eleanor is the one thing in the world I wouldn't give up to get this election.

[TERESA *looks at him meaningly as she goes out.*

GEORGE. What did you mean by looking for personal graft out of this election just now, with Mr. Vorhees.

HANNOCK. I was showing my hand, that's all. I was calling the pot! It's time!

GEORGE. You don't know the men you're dealing with!

HANNOCK. [*Looking* GEORGE *squarely and meaningly in the face.*] I know one of them better than he knows himself!

GEORGE. Listen, Hannock! That day my father died, I promised myself and his memory I'd look after you, and look after you well — not like a dependent on father's charity —

HANNOCK. [*Interrupts.*] Damned unwilling charity — he was *afraid* —

GEORGE. We won't go into the story of your mother — [HANNOCK *winces.*] I've tried to treat you as I would a — brother who was unlucky — somebody I was *glad* to give a hand to —

HANNOCK. [*Interrupting.*] Well, haven't I made good? What complaints have you —

GEORGE. [*Going on.*] You've been of the greatest service to me in every way. There's no question about that! But it's time for us now to open a new pack, and each go his own way —

HANNOCK. [*Thunderstruck.*] What's that you say?

GEORGE. I'm going to offer you a fixed yearly income, — a sum we'll agree on, — and you're to get a job elsewhere, that's all —

HANNOCK. [*Dry and ugly.*] Is it!

GEORGE. What do you say?

HANNOCK. Oh, I've got a hell of a lot to say!

GEORGE. Cut it down to yes or no, and we'll discuss the amount of the income!

HANNOCK. *No!!!* You haven't got to give half of what I expect to get out of the present situation!

GEORGE. [*Angry, but controlled.*] If you don't look out, you'll get *nothing.*

HANNOCK. [*Sneers.*] Pah! Just wait till I begin to open your eyes for you! For instance, how about the New Brunswick deal?

GEORGE. *What about* it? [*On the defensive.*

HANNOCK. As crooked as anything that's ever been in "high finance"!

[*With a sneer.*

GEORGE. What do you mean? You knew

that deal from the very beginning — you knew every step I took in it?

HANNOCK. Yes, *I* did! I notice you kept the transaction pretty quiet from everybody else.

GEORGE. It was nobody else's business. My father taught me that —

HANNOCK. [*Not listening out.*] *Yes!* — and he taught you a lot of *other* things, too! But you go farther than he would have dared.

GEORGE. That's enough!

HANNOCK. What's the difference between your deal, and the Troy business that sent Pealy to State's Prison?

GEORGE. Every difference!

HANNOCK. [*Triumphantly.*] *Is* there? *Think* a minute! [*A second's pause.*] You gambled with your partner's money: Pealy gambled with his bank's.

GEORGE. It wasn't my *partner's* money; it was the *firm's*.

HANNOCK. But you were the only one who knew what was being done with it.

GEORGE. My partner got his fair share, didn't he?

HANNOCK. Yes, but you got the *unfair!* You got paid pretty high for your "*influence.*" Nobody else had any chance to sell theirs! If that isn't taking money under false pretences, if it isn't using funds you haven't the right to use, — there was a miscarriage of justice in the Pealy case, that's all.

GEORGE. But —!

HANNOCK. Go over the two deals with *Vorhees*, if you don't believe *me! Show him* the differences between the Brunswick Transaction and the Pealy case, — if he can *see* any!

[*Enter* ELEANOR, *breezily, enthusiastically.*

ELEANOR. Good morning! [*She sees* HANNOCK*; her manner changes to a cold one.*] Good morning, Mr. Hannock.

HANNOCK. Good morning, Miss Vorhees. Excuse me!

[*He passes* MISS VORHEES, *and goes out; as he goes, with his back to them, he is seen taking out from his pocket his hypodermic needle, and a small bottle,—and, by then, he is out.* ELEANOR *and* GEORGE *silently follow him with their eyes.*

ELEANOR. [*Turning.*] What *is* it about him?

GEORGE. [*Kisses her.*] *You* don't like him either?

ELEANOR. I *detest* him! What Cicely can see in him I —

GEORGE. [*Quietly.*] Cicely?

ELEANOR. Yes, I've come to-day as a go-between — between you and Cicely —

GEORGE. Ha! Cicely's clever enough to know how to get what she wants from me. She has only to use you —

ELEANOR. She's in love with your secretary.

GEORGE. [*Not taking it in.*] What?

ELEANOR. Cicely and Mr. Hannock are in love with each other —

GEORGE. [*Aghast.*] Impossible —

ELEANOR. I know; I felt the same as you do. I detest him; he's no match for Cicely — I feel instinctively the last man in the world for her.

GEORGE. Even *not* that —

ELEANOR. But Cicely insists. They wish to marry.

GEORGE. Never!

ELEANOR. She guessed you would be against it. She says we none of us like Hannock, and

nobody's fair to him; and so she begged me to persuade you. She asked me to remember how much *I* loved *you*, and what *our* marriage meant to *us*. You see, I couldn't refuse! But I'm afraid I'm not a very good go-between; my heart isn't in it!

GEORGE. [*Hardly hearing* ELEANOR.] It's beyond believing! [*He touches the bell with decision.*] I must talk to Cicely now, before she sees Hannock again.

ELEANOR. Wouldn't it be better without me? She might resent your refusing and giving your reasons before me.

[*Enter* FOOT.

GEORGE. Ask Miss Cicely to come here at once, please.

FOOT. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out.*

GEORGE. Perhaps it *would* be better.

ELEANOR. George, it doesn't make any difference to *you* that Hannock has no family or position? Cicely thinks you're prejudiced against him because his mother was a milliner or dressmaker — or something —

GEORGE. Of course that makes no difference to me —

ELEANOR. And you wouldn't be influenced against a man by your personal feeling, where your sister's happiness was concerned, would you? [*He shakes his head.*] If you don't *know* anything against Hannock, you'll let him have a *chance* to prove himself worthy of Cicely, won't you?

GEORGE. Eleanor, it can't be! Don't ask me any questions, but believe me, nothing could make such a thing possible, — personal preju-

dice and any other kind aside! I want you to help me pull Cicely through it. I may even ask you to take Cicely into your house for a while. Would you do this for me? Teresa and Don, you know, would be no comfort, and, on the other hand, would set her a bad example, and fan every little rebellious flame in her!

ELEANOR. Of course, I'll do whatever I possibly can, dear. This is the very sort of thing I want to *share* with you, if I can't take it *entirely* off your shoulders. [*Enter* CICELY.

CICELY. [*Half defiant, half timid and hopeful.*] Well?

ELEANOR. [*Going. To* CICELY, *speaking tenderly.*] I won't go home yet. I'll wait for you upstairs.

CICELY. Humph! *Thank* you; I know what *that* means! [ELEANOR *goes out.*

GEORGE. My dear girl, it isn't possible that you care for Hannock?

CICELY. [*Determined.*] Yes, *very much!*

GEORGE. Well, even that may be, but still not in the way you think.

CICELY. *I love him!* Oh, I knew you'd be against it! Nobody cares for him in this house!

GEORGE. [*Quickly.*] And that's *why you* do! You're *sorry* for him, my dear girl! It's *pity*, not *love!*

CICELY. [*Increasing her resentment and determination.*] Nothing of the sort! He doesn't need my pity in any way.

GEORGE. It's just as I would feel toward a girl who seemed to me to be ignored.

CICELY. Abused! As good as *insulted here*, by everybody!

GEORGE. You *think* so, and your sympathy is aroused, — but that's not love.

CICELY. You don't know what you're talking about!

GEORGE. Yes, I do, — better than you. You've never been in love in your life, and so you mistake something, that is probably like a sisterly affection for this man, for the other thing.

CICELY. *Ridiculous!*

GEORGE. You don't know the difference now —

CICELY. Nonsense!

GEORGE. But you'll realize it some day when the right man comes along —

CICELY. [*Satirically.*] I hope not! It would be awkward, as *I shall be married* to Fred Hannock.

GEORGE. No, you'll never be married to Hannock!

CICELY. *You're* not my father!

GEORGE. But I represent him, and I tell you you must give up this idea —

CICELY. [*Interrupting angrily.*] And I tell you I won't! Good-by!

[*Starting to go.*

GEORGE. Wait a minute. [*Rings bell.*] You can't marry this man. He isn't good enough for you!

CICELY. Humph!

GEORGE. Or for any self-respecting woman to marry, as far as that goes.

CICELY. Your opinion as to whom I shall marry, or not, means absolutely nothing to me.

GEORGE. Very well, I'll go even farther. I'll tell you that, even if both my reasons for disapproving of Hannock were done away with, — still, I say for you to marry him is *impossible*,

and I, as your elder brother, *representing your father*, forbid it. [*Enter* FOOT.

FOOT. Yes, sir?

GEORGE. Ask Mr. Hannock to come here.

FOOT. Yes, sir. [*Goes out.*

GEORGE. I shall tell him, *before you*, anything between him and you is absolutely impossible, — that I forbid it, and that he is dismissed from my service.

CICELY. Then I will go with him, if he wants me to. Do you think I'm going to have *him* lose his position and everything *through me*, and not stick to him?

GEORGE. [*With tension.*] *Sorry for him!* That's all it is! *Sorry for him!*

CICELY. *It's not* — and you can forbid now till doomsday. I'm my own mistress, and I shall do as I *darn please!* I shall marry the man

I want to, in spite of you — and the whole family, if necessary, — but I wanted to give you the chance to stand by me — [*Her voice falters, and she turns away; she cries.*] I felt you *wouldn't*, but I wanted you to, and that's why — I've come here now — and let you — humiliate me — in this — way. I wanted my own brother to sympathize with me, to help me. Everybody will follow your lead!

GEORGE. [*Goes to her, and puts his arms about her.*] Cis! I can't tell you how sorry I am! Not since father died have I felt as I do now. I've nothing to gain or lose except your affection, dear girl, and your happiness, so you can believe me when I say this marriage *can't* be —

[*She pushes his arm away and faces him.*

CICELY. [*Literal and absolutely unconvinced or frightened.*] *Why* not?

GEORGE. I *can't tell* you.

CICELY. Well, you know me well enough to realize such reasoning with me is a waste of breath.

GEORGE. [*Suffering.*] I want to *spare* you —

CICELY. *What?* It doesn't seem to me you're *sparing* me much!

GEORGE. But listen — Vorhees just now told me — Hannock isn't on the level, — he isn't *honest!*

CICELY. I won't take Bert Vorhees' word for that! Fred's been your right-hand man here for four years and over. Have you ever found him doing a single dishonest thing? I'm sure you haven't, or you wouldn't have kept him. I don't know why you did *anyway!* It was perfectly evident you didn't like him!

[HANNOCK *enters.*

GEORGE. [*Quickly, before he is fully in the room, and going to the door.*] Hannock, please excuse me. Will you wait one minute in the hall?

HANNOCK. [*In the doorway. He looks questioningly at* CICELY. *She nods her head.*] Certainly.

[*He goes out.*

GEORGE. [*Intensely, with his hand on the knob, holding the door closed behind him.*] *Listen* to me, for God's sake! You're my *sister*, I'm your *brother*. Have I ever showed that I did anything but love you?

CICELY. No, that's why I hoped —

GEORGE. [*Interrupting, almost beside himself.*] *But it can't be!!* Won't you *trust* me, — *won't* you? Let me tell Hannock, without going any deeper into it, that — you realize the marriage

can't be; that you and he mustn't meet again! You can say what kind things you —

CICELY. [*Flashing.*] Never!! You ought to know me better than to propose any such thing!

[*She moves toward the door.*

GEORGE. [*With a movement to stop her.*] For your *own sake,* for *his sake,* for *mother's,* for *everybody's* — *trust* me and —

CICELY. [*Looking him directly in the face after a second's silence, speaks with the note of finality.*] Listen! I *married Fred Hannock* this morning!

[GEORGE *looks at her, his eyes dilating. There is a pause.*

GEORGE. [*In horror.*] What!!

CICELY. I *married* Fred Hannock half an hour ago. We walked home from the church, separately. He went to his work, and I sent for Eleanor.

GEORGE. [*In a voice of terrible but suppressed rage, goes to the door, throws it open with violence, and calls loudly:*] Come in!

[HANNOCK *enters quietly, expecting a fight or a scene; he is on the defensive and not in any way frightened.*

GEORGE. [*Controlling himself by a big effort.*] Is this *true*, what my sister says, that behind my back you've been making love to her —

CICELY. [*Interrupting him.*] I *never* said that!

GEORGE. That you've repaid all that I've done for you, and all my father did, by taking advantage of our kindness and your position here to run off with —

CICELY. [*Interrupting.*] I was as anxious to run off as he —

GEORGE. But why wasn't I told? Why do it secretly? [*To* HANNOCK.] Why didn't you go

about it in the square, open way, unless you *knew* you were doing wrong?

HANNOCK. I knew you'd fight it for all you were worth, and I wasn't going to run any risk of losing her!

CICELY. But you wouldn't have! My brother would have wasted his words then, as much as he is now —

HANNOCK. I was afraid — any fool in my place could see how I've really stood in this family. The only friend I had in the house, or who ever came to it, was *she!*

[*With a wave of his hand toward* CICELY.

GEORGE. And that's *why!* Can't you see it? Don't you know the difference between *pity* and *love?*

CICELY. *I* love *him* and *he knows it;* — *don't* you, Fred?

HANNOCK. Yes, *I do know it!* As well as I know your brother only kept me here because — [*turning to* GEORGE] you were afraid of me!

GEORGE. *Afraid of you?*

HANNOCK. Yes! Do you suppose I didn't guess your father must have told you I was on to him in the bank!

GEORGE. Leave the dead alone! You've got your hands full with the *living!*

HANNOCK. Well, I know my business well enough to realize that once Cicely and I were married, you'd have to make the best of it!

GEORGE. Never! I tell you this marriage is *no* marriage!

[CICELY *and* HANNOCK *exclaim in derision.*

CICELY. What's the use of talking any more about it? We aren't getting anywhere! It's *done* — and George has *got* to make the best of it!

GEORGE. I tell you it can't be! Will you take my word, Hannock?

HANNOCK. No!

[*Laughs loudly.*

GEORGE. Then, I must go ahead without you! You're dismissed. Do you hear? You're *discharged* from my employ!

HANNOCK. [*Getting very angry, but controlled.*] *You take care!*

GEORGE. [*Continues determinedly.*] You'll leave this house to-day. I'll give you an hour to pack up and get out, and you'll never lay your eyes on this girl again.

CICELY. If he goes now, I'll go with him. I'm his wife!

GEORGE. You *won't go* with him!

HANNOCK. Who'll prevent her?

GEORGE. *I will!*

HANNOCK. [*In a blaze.*] Try it!!

CICELY. I've just promised to love, honor and obey him — and if he says to come, I'll go!

GEORGE. [*Slowly but strongly.*] *He won't say it.*

HANNOCK. I *do* say it! Come on, Cicely! But if you want to come back, you can, because, before I'm through with your brother, I'll get him down on to his knees, begging me to come back, and I won't come *without you!*

GEORGE. [*Going to the door and holding it open.*] Cicely, will you wait in here with Eleanor for a few minutes?

HANNOCK. Oh, we can speak out before her! I want my wife to know the truth about everything! I don't intend to be the goat in this family any longer!

GEORGE. Well, you can tell Cicely, afterward,

what I'm going to tell you, if you like. God keep me from ever having to tell her!

[*After a look straight at* HANNOCK, *he looks at* CICELY *very seriously. She responds to his look, impressed by it, and turns her eyes to* HANNOCK. *Neither quite understands, but each feels the depth of seriousness in* GEORGE'S *attitude.*

HANNOCK. [*Doggedly to* CICELY.] Go on.

CICELY. [*To* HANNOCK.] I'll wait there for you. Don't do anything without me. I'm so sorry my brother takes this attitude! Don't think it can influence *me*, any more than the disgraceful way you've always been treated here has; *nothing* they say can change *me* toward you, Fred! [*She leaves them.*

GEORGE. I didn't *want to* have to tell you this. I'd rather almost die than have to tell

Cicely! I must break faith with father, but of course he'd be the first to ask me to. I must dig out a skeleton that is rotting in its closet — that's the trouble! I must do this, and a lot more, if you make me, and give *you* a couple of blows which will come pretty near to knocking you out, if you've anything at all of a man in you. And every bit of it can be spared *everybody*, if you'll go away and let Cicely — divorce you.

HANNOCK. Well, I *won't!*

GEORGE. Because you won't give up Cicely?

HANNOCK. Exactly. I love her better than anything, — money, comfort, happiness, everything you can think of, — so go on, fire your last gun, and let's get through with it! My wife —

GEORGE. [*With excitement.*] She *isn't* your wife! —[HANNOCK *looks at him and sneers.*

GEORGE'S *rage at* HANNOCK *is only governed by the tragedy of the whole thing.*] Your *marriage wasn't any marriage!*

HANNOCK. [*A little frightened, and very angry now.*] What do you mean? —

GEORGE. [*Looks towards the door where* CICELY *has gone, and, with difficulty, manages to control his voice, as he lowers it.*] Cicely is your *sister!*

HANNOCK. [*With a cry.*] Cicely is *what?*

GEORGE. *Your sister!*

HANNOCK. [*Sees "red," and goes nearly mad.*] You're a God damn liar!

GEORGE. It's the truth —

HANNOCK. [*Out of his mind, with an insane laugh.*] You're a liar! [CICELY, *alarmed, opens the door to come in.* HANNOCK *shouts at her angrily, in an ugly voice:*] You go back! — and shut the door! Do *you hear!* Get *out of this room!*

GEORGE. [*Strong, but more kind.*] Wait in the room till I call you.

HANNOCK. [*Brokenly — ugly.*] I don't want her hanging round here now! This is none of her business, none o' hers!

GEORGE. [*Speaks toward the doorway.*] Eleanor, I don't want Cicely to hear what we're saying.

ELEANOR. [*Answering.*] Very good.

[*She is seen shutting the door.*

HANNOCK. [*Making guttural sounds, and unable to pronounce the words clearly.*] Hugh — hugh — hah! — You'd play any game to get rid of me, wouldn't you? But you can't fool me like that!!

[*He sits in a chair, mumbling to himself incoherently every other minute, working his hands, his mouth and his chin wet with saliva.*

GEORGE. That day I saw you first, just before he died, my father told me.

HANNOCK. I don't believe it!

GEORGE. He made me promise two things: — that I wouldn't tell you — never! — and that I would look out for you.

HANNOCK. I don't *believe it!*

GEORGE. That's why your mother got her allowance, — and to buy her silence —

HANNOCK. I don't *believe it!*

[*Laughing and weeping.*

GEORGE. Now, you see why you must leave here to-day — leave New York! Why there was no marriage this morning and never can be! Why —

HANNOCK. [*His mind deranged, rises unevenly; he is loud, partly incoherent, and his face is twitching and distorted, his hands clutching and clenching, his whole body wracked and trembling, but still strong, with a nervous madman's strength.*] It's all a *lie* — to separate Cicely from me!

GEORGE. [*Goes to him and sees the change.*] Hannock!

HANNOCK. I'll never believe it!

GEORGE. [*Taking him by the shoulder.*] Have you gone out of your mind!

HANNOCK. I'll never give her up!

GEORGE. *What!! I tell you, she's your sister!*

HANNOCK. And I say *I don't believe it!* I *love* her, she *loves* me. I won't give her up!!

GEORGE. *Yes, you will!!*

HANNOCK. *I won't!* Do you think I'd give her up to some other fellow to hold in his arms! For some other man to *love* and *take care of!!* You're crazy!! She said if I said come, she'd go with me, and I'll say it!!

[*He starts toward the door.* GEORGE *takes hold of him to stop him from calling her.*

GEORGE. Wait! If you don't give her up

now, after what I've told you, *and leave here* before she comes out of that room, I'll have to do the only thing left, — *tell her !*

HANNOCK. [*Furious.*] No, you won't! You sha'n't tell her! It isn't *true!* And if it was, by God, she sha'n't know it! It *would separate* us!

GEORGE. [*Horrified at what this means, calls sternly and with determination :*] Cicely!

HANNOCK. [*Wildly.*] *Don't you dare to tell her that lie !*

ELEANOR. [*Opening the door.*] You want Cicely to come in?

GEORGE. Yes.

[ELEANOR *turns away from the door, leaving it open behind her.* CICELY *appears, and enters,* — *leaving the door open.*

HANNOCK. There isn't any lie too big for him

to make up to separate us! I'm going! Will you come with me?

CICELY. Of course!

GEORGE. Cicely! Are you strong? Are you brave? You must hear something *unbelievably terrible!*

HANNOCK. [*Holding out his hand beggingly.*] Come along, don't listen to him!

[*She makes a movement toward* HANNOCK.

GEORGE. You *can't!* [*Taking hold of her.*

CICELY. I *will!* Leave go of me!

[*Struggling desperately.*

GEORGE. [*Puts his arms about her, and holds her in his arms — her back to him.*] My poor child, he's your —

[HANNOCK, *without warning, pulls out a pistol from his hip pocket, and shoots her dead in* GEORGE'S *arms.*

ELEANOR. [*Calls, in fright.*] George!!

GEORGE. Cicely! [*He holds her in his arms, and carries her over to sofa. Calls brokenly:*] Cicely!

[ELEANOR *enters quickly, and goes to them.*

ELEANOR. [*In horror as she sees.*] *Oh!*

GEORGE. Take her.

[ELEANOR *takes* CICELY *tenderly from him.*

HANNOCK. Now, you nor nobody else can separate us!

[*Lifts the pistol to his heart to shoot, feeling for the place he showed in Act I.* GEORGE *springs forward and gets hold of him and the pistol before he can shoot.*

GEORGE. No! *That's too good for you!* That's too easy! By God, you've got to *pay.*

[*Enter* FOOT *in excitement.*

FOOT. Excuse me, sir, I heard —

GEORGE. All right. Telephone for the police. Is she breathing, Eleanor? [ELEANOR *shakes her head.*] Oh, God!

[*Bowing his head, emotion surges up in him.* HANNOCK, *in this moment of weakness, almost frees himself and almost gets hold of the pistol.*

ELEANOR. [*Who is watching, cries out in alarm.*] George! George, be careful! [GEORGE *pulls himself together too quickly for him, and prevents* HANNOCK. FOOT *starts to go. To* FOOT:] Help me; it won't take you a moment!

GEORGE. No! Foot, I know I can trust you. [*Giving him the pistol.*] Keep this, yourself, and don't let him get out of the room.

FOOT. Yes, sir.

[*Takes the pistol, and stands before* HANNOCK. GEORGE *goes to* CICELY, *and takes her in his arms.*

GEORGE. Poor little woman! little sister! Why did this have to be! I wonder if *this* is what they call the sins of the fathers?

[*He carries her out of the room, Left, followed by* ELEANOR. HANNOCK, *the moment they are gone, makes a movement.* FOOT *at once covers him with the pistol.*

HANNOCK. Give *me* that pistol!

FOOT. No, sir.

HANNOCK. Name your own *price!*

FOOT. Miss Cicely's life back, sir!

HANNOCK. *You're* against me too, *are* you! Every one's against *me!*

[GEORGE *comes back.*

GEORGE. [*Taking the pistol from* FOOT.] Thank you. Now, telephone, and ask them to be quick, please.

FOOT. Shall I come back, sir?

GEORGE. No, I think this job had better be mine.

[*Looking hard at* HANNOCK.

HANNOCK. [*Quickly.*] I won't try to get away, —I give you my word of honor.

GEORGE. Your word of honor! [*To* FOOT.] When you've telephoned, go to Miss Vorhees.

FOOT. Yes, sir.

GEORGE. Ask her to keep my mother and Mrs. Van Vranken from coming here.

FOOT. Yes, sir.

[*Goes out.*

HANNOCK. [*Makes a move for* GEORGE.] Give me that gun! [*There is a short struggle.* GEORGE *breaks from* HANNOCK, *and, crossing to the table, lays the pistol on it.* HANNOCK *makes a tricky attempt to get to it quickly, but is caught by* GEORGE, *who holds him. The following scene takes place*

with GEORGE *keeping hold of* HANNOCK, *who sometimes struggles and sometimes tries to break, suddenly or craftily, away from George's grip, and at other times remains quiescent.*] You're a damn fool! Don't you see it's the easiest way all around for us? I've got to die anyway.

GEORGE. But not that way. That's too easy for you!

HANNOCK. Well, it's easier for you, too, with me out of the way! There's no arrest, no trial, no scandal! Nobody'll know I was her brother; nobody'll know about your father! Think what it'll save your mother! Think what it'll save you! Think what it'll save everybody!

GEORGE. Including *you*, — and you don't deserve to be saved *anything!*

HANNOCK. Still, even *I* am your own blood! For God's sake, go on, let me! All you have

to do is to turn your back a minute — it won't take *two!* Please! Think of *her* — what it'll save her memory!

GEORGE. No!

HANNOCK. Then for your mother's sake! How can *she* go through a trial and all *that* means!

GEORGE. Your work in the next room is worse than any trial for her to bear.

HANNOCK. Think of yourself, of the election! What will my trial do to your election?

GEORGE. I'm not thinking of my election now, — I'm thinking of that little, still figure lying in the next room!

HANNOCK. [*Emotionally, almost crying.*] There'd have been two, if you hadn't stopped me! For the love of God, give me the gun —

GEORGE. No! *You've got to sit in the chair!*

HANNOCK. [*With an ugly change.*] Well, you'll

get *your* punishment, too, — don't you forget that!! I know how eaten up with ambition you are! And every single wish nearest to your heart will die just as dead as I do, if you let me go to trial!

GEORGE. What do you think you're doing?

HANNOCK. If I have to pay *my price*, I'll make you pay *yours*. And you'll be dead, publicly and politically, before I go into the condemned cell.

GEORGE. You're crazy, and that's the only thing that may save you, if *Matteawan* is salvation!

HANNOCK. I knew your father was dishonest, and I told him that day; I guess it killed him. And I've watched you, and tempted you, and helped you go on with his methods! Every bit of this will come out in my trial. I'll get a clever enough lawyer to manage *that!* And you'll lose,

not only your ambition, but your position in the world, and one more thing besides, — *the woman you're in love with!* For that kind of a high-browed moral crank wouldn't stand for one half *you* stand for in business, and when she finds out how deceived she's been in you, if I know human nature, she won't have that much love left for you — [*Snapping his fingers.*] And *she'll find out*, and they'll *all know!* — *your party* and the *other* party! That election'll be a hell of a walk-over for the other side!

[ELEANOR *enters.*

GEORGE. What is it, Eleanor? I don't want you here.

HANNOCK. [*Half aside, with a half jeer, and a half smile.*] Hah!

ELEANOR. Excuse me. Bert wants you on the telephone. Shall I answer?

GEORGE. Yes, please. [HANNOCK *begins to steal behind, toward the pistol.*] Does mother know?

ELEANOR. Yes, and she's very plucky. But I'm surprised how full she is of the desire for revenge! [GEORGE *turns and sees* HANNOCK, *and quickly but quietly intercepts him, and stands with his hand on the pistol.*] She wants Hannock punished! She's watching for the police!

GEORGE. They ought to be here soon, now.

ELEANOR. Teresa is with me. She feels it terribly. [*Goes out.*

HANNOCK. Do you realize how completely you'll be done for, if you don't let me do it? The New Brunswick business isn't a patch on some of your other deals I know about!

GEORGE. I've never done a thing in business that couldn't stand the strictest overhauling.

HANNOCK. If you believe that, you're a bigger fool than I thought! *I'd* rather be a *crook* than a *fool*, any day! Quick, before she comes from the telephone! Turn your back; walk to the door there! It's easily explained; — you're not to blame!

GEORGE. *No!*

HANNOCK. [*Hysterically.*] If you *don't*, I'll explain now, *before her*, where and how your standard in business is rotten, and your dealings crooked, — and you *can begin to take* your medicine!

GEORGE. I dare you!

[ELEANOR *comes back.*

ELEANOR. Bert wants me to tell you it's settled, — your nomination — and he adds, "*good luck!*"

GEORGE. Did you tell him about —?

ELEANOR. No — I — I told him to come here as soon as he could.

GEORGE. All right.

[ELEANOR *starts to go.*

HANNOCK. [*Excitedly.*] Wait a minute, Miss Vorhees!

GEORGE. No, Eleanor, go back, please!

HANNOCK. [*Quickly.*] This man, who thinks he has it on me, is afraid to have you hear the truth about himself. That's why he don't want you to stay.

GEORGE. [*To* ELEANOR.] Stay!

HANNOCK. You think George Rand stands for honesty, and the square deal in the business world! Well, he does, but *it's a lie!* And if he wasn't paying up to the hilt — East, West, North and South — to protect himself, everybody in this country would know what we, on the inside, do!

ELEANOR. George, unless you'd really rather I stayed, I don't want to hear what he has to say about you.

HANNOCK. [*Quickly.*] I don't blame you for not wanting to hear about the suicide of Henry Bodes! [*To* GEORGE.] Do you know who killed Bodes? *You did!*

GEORGE. The man's out of his mind still, Eleanor.

HANNOCK. Am I? Bodes was on to your Copper Pit scheme, and *saw it succeed* — so he tried one like it, and it failed!

GEORGE. Was that *my* fault?

HANNOCK. Yes! It was your example set him on, and do you think your scheme was legitimate?

GEORGE. So help me God, I *do!*

HANNOCK. Then why, when it failed, did Bodes kill himself? He wasn't *broke!* It wasn't

money that drove him to it! It was *shame*, because his scheme was *crooked*, just as yours was. Success covered it, but failure showed it up.

ELEANOR. Don't ask me to listen to this any longer!

[*She goes out.* GEORGE *watches her go, but* HANNOCK *only gives a quick glance after her.*

HANNOCK. Bodes was one of your sweet, weak family men, who can't stand on disgrace!

GEORGE. Disgrace!!

HANNOCK. Ask Vorhees, — and about the New Brunswick case! And get him to *tell you the truth!*

GEORGE. [*Half to himself.*] Good God! If there is something in all this?

HANNOCK. What are you paying Elmer Caston ten thousand a year for?

GEORGE. For his legal services!

HANNOCK. Rot! The firm's never used him —

GEORGE. But keeping him on our pay list keeps him from working against us.

HANNOCK. Hush money!

GEORGE. No!

HANNOCK. *Why* were all these Amsterdam tunnel bonds made over to Parker Jennings?

GEORGE. He helped us get the bill passed!

HANNOCK. *Ask Vorhees* if he wouldn't put that down in the expense-book under the name of Blackmail.

GEORGE. No!

HANNOCK. Ask Vorhees!

GEORGE. You can't alter the diplomacy of the business world — calling it by ugly names.

HANNOCK. No, I can't, but *Roosevelt did!*

GEORGE. If you think I'm afraid of what you —

HANNOCK. Oh, come! Stop bluffing! If you don't realize I know what I'm talking about, I'll go on. I know at least *five* separate deals of yours so damned crooked, if any *one* of them were made public you'd be out of business over night, and out of the country, if you know your job. [*He waits. No answer.* GEORGE *is weighing the truth or the lie of what he is saying. He evidently sees some truth in it.*] And I've got proof of what I say! Every proof! I've got copies of letters and telegrams, when I couldn't get the originals. I've got shorthand reports of private telephone conversations. I've got data enough for fifty trials, if it should come to that. I've been preparing for a deal of my own *with you* ever since I came to you! Only — God! [*He is moved as he thinks of* CICELY.] I didn't think it would be trying to get rid of my life!

I'd planned to make you finance a big game for me!

GEORGE. If what you say is true — and I don't know but what some of it may be, — then it's good-by to everything for me, and it'll be about all I'm worth having come to me.

HANNOCK. That's it! Even Middleburg'll be too small for you, if I show you up! But you know what'll shut my lips tight! Gimme the gun —

GEORGE. [*Quickly.*] No.

HANNOCK. [*Pleadingly.*] You've *everything* to get, and *nothing* to lose by it!

GEORGE. Yes, I have something to lose! — what rag of honor I've got left!

HANNOCK. No! Think a minute — if *I'm* out of the way? There's no real scandal — your father's old story — *our* father's old story —

isn't even known by *your mother*. I shot Cicely, and killed myself, — it's an ordinary story. I was drunk or crazy — she wouldn't have me. Any story you want to make up, and there'll not be a murmur against Cicely, then! But can you see the papers if the *real story comes out!!* All over this country, and all the countries, it'll be telegraphed and pictured and revelled in. It'll even get into the cinematograph shows in Europe — with some low down girl masquerading as Cicely.

GEORGE. Stop! *Stop!*

HANNOCK. And the story will come out, if I go to trial. I'll stop at nothing to take it out of you. Whether you believe or not what I say about your business methods, you take my word for it, my arrest will put a quietus on your election, and *finish you*, not only in a political career, but any old career at all!

GEORGE. What a finish! What a finish of all I hoped to do and be!

HANNOCK. And — you'll lose the woman who's just left this room. Whether all *her brother's* high-browed talk is bunkum or not, even *I* know *hers* is serious; and if she finds you've deceived her all the time, that your high ideals are *fake* — !

GEORGE. [*Interrupts, crying, in an agony half to himself:*] They're not! They're not! God knows, nobody's been more deceived in me than I've been myself!

HANNOCK. Well, you know she won't stand for it. A girl like — her heart couldn't stomach it! Go on, bring me to trial and lose everything you've banked on for a career! Lose your business standing, lose your best friends, lose the woman you want, and raise the rottenest

scandal for your family, for your mother, to bear, and your little sister's memory to go foul under! Do it all, and be damned to you!!

[*He falls on his knees with exhaustion.*

GEORGE. My God, how can I?

HANNOCK. [*Whining, pleading.*] All you have to do, to save every mother's son of us, is to let me do what the law'll do anyway! Leave that pistol where I can get it, and walk half a dozen steps away. That's all you need do! [*He sees* GEORGE *hesitate.*] It's *all* or nothing for you!! It's the finish or the beginning! Are you ready and willing to be down and out, and go through the hell my living'll mean for you? [*He sees* GEORGE *weaken more.*] You'll be Governor! Sure, you'll marry Miss Vorhees! You'll find all the proofs I told you about in my safety deposit box at the Manhattan. And there'll be only *white*

flowers and pity on the new little grave! It'll be your *chance* to prove by the future that you were made of the right stuff at heart, after all!

[GEORGE *puts down the pistol not far from* HANNOCK'S *reach, and starts to walk away with a set face — suffering.* HANNOCK *makes a slow, silent step towards the pistol, but, before he can get it,* GEORGE *turns and recovers it, with a terrific revulsion of feeling. He seizes the pistol and throws it through the big glass window.*

GEORGE. No! I haven't the right! You must take your punishment as it comes, and I *must take mine!* [*He suddenly breaks down; tears fill his throat and pour from his eyes.* HANNOCK *is crouching and drivelling on the floor.*] This is my *only chance to show I can be on the level!* That

I *can be straight,* when it's plain what *is* the right thing to do! God help me *do it!*

[*The door opens and a* POLICEMAN *enters with* FOOT, *as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS

ACT III

SCENE: *Same room as Act II, only seen from another point of view. The mantel is now Right and the windows Back. Left is the wall not seen before. Later the same day.* VORHEES *and* GEORGE *are seated at the desk before a mass of business papers. There is a tall whiskey-and-soda glass, nearly empty, and a plate with the remnants of some sandwiches, beside* GEORGE. *The shades of the windows are drawn, but it is still daylight.* GEORGE *looks crushed, mentally and physically, but is calm and immovable.* VORHEES *looks stern and disappointed. There is a pause; neither men move.*

GEORGE. That's all? [VORHEES *nods his head.*

GEORGE *drinks, and gathers up the papers.*] What's to be done with these papers? Are they Hannock's or mine?

VORHEES. They have only to do with *your* affairs. Hannock hadn't any right to them! In any case, you don't pretend to deny anything these papers prove. Destroy them!

GEORGE. But —

[*Getting up all the papers, except some of his own, which he separates and leaves on the desk.*

VORHEES. I doubt if, when it comes to the point, Hannock will go into all this business! He will have had months to cool down, and his hands will be full enough. [*He gives* GEORGE *a couple of papers he has had in his hand, and motions to the fireplace.*] Here! don't wash your dirty linen; *burn* it!

[GEORGE *goes to the fireplace with a mass of papers, and burns them.*

GEORGE. [*As the papers burn.*] Has Eleanor gone home?

VORHEES. Yes, but she promised your mother to come back later and stop over-night with her.

GEORGE. I wonder if she'd be willing to see me?

VORHEES. Yes, because I'm sure she didn't believe Hannock.

GEORGE. Tess can stay with mother. There'll be no need of her pretending to go back to Don, now.

VORHEES. *Pretending!*

GEORGE. Yes. That's something else I did, — persuaded Tess to make Don believe she'd come back in accordance with his conditions. But it was agreed between us she was to break her word to him, *after the election!*

[*He burns his last batch of papers.*

VORHEES. It's a pity you can't burn that, too! I'd have staked my reputation on your being

absolutely on the level! How I have been taken in by you!

GEORGE. I know, it sounds ridiculous, and I don't expect you to understand it; but I've been taken in by myself, too! Shall I write my withdrawal from the nomination, or will you take a verbal message?

VORHEES. Write it. It will make less for me to say by way of explanation. [GEORGE *goes to the desk and writes.*] I'm sorry, I'm sorry, George. I *know* what it means to you!

GEORGE. Somehow now, it doesn't seem so much, after all; I suppose that's Cicely — poor little girl — poor little girl, — and — Eleanor.

[*He adds the last, almost in a whisper.*

VORHEES. You're a *young* man, George! You've got a good chance yet to make good, and it's all up to you!

GEORGE. I know that —

VORHEES. I suppose you won't want to go back to Middleburg?

GEORGE. No! No!! For everybody's sake! But, *would it have* been wrong — leave *me out of it*, — to have saved *father's memory*, to have saved mother — could I have let him do it?

VORHEES. You know you couldn't!

GEORGE. Yes, and anyway, I didn't. Why can't I forget it!

VORHEES. Oh, it'll be many a day before you *deserve* to forget it!

GEORGE. But, will *you* ever have any confidence in me? Can any one ever believe in me again?

[*Buries his face in his hands, and groans.*

VORHEES. *I can.* Whether I *do* or not, is entirely up to you.

GEORGE. You're sure of that?

VORHEES. [*Takes his hand and shakes it.*] Sure.

GEORGE. And Eleanor?

VORHEES. Well — there's no use in my lying about it. If I know her, you must give up all idea of marrying her. Eleanor's husband must be a man she can *look up* to. That's a necessity of her nature — she can't help it. But I *do* believe she'll *help you* with *her friendship*. If you don't go back to Middleburg, where will you go?

GEORGE. Here! I stay *right here!*

VORHEES. [*Surprised.*] Here! It'll be *hard.*

GEORGE. I suppose it will!

VORHEES. How will you start?

GEORGE. First, make a clean breast to my partners! Give back all the money I've made

in ways which you've proved to me are illegal. Publish every form of graft I've benefited by, for the sake of future protection! Resign from all —

VORHEES. It's gigantic! It's colossal! *Can* you *do* it?

GEORGE. [*Simply.*] I can try. I'm going to have a go at it, anyway!

VORHEES. The Press! Among your professional associates — here and all over the State — it'll be hell for you to go through!

GEORGE. I know it! I know it! But to get back where I want to be — if I ever can! I've got to fight it out right here, and make good *here*, or not at all. I don't care what it costs me!

TERESA. [*Opening the door.*] May I come in?

GEORGE. Yes, come in, Tess. Where's mother?

TERESA. She's locked herself in her room!

She's *turned against me* in the most extraordinary manner! Says my influence over Cicely is at the bottom of everything! [*She begins to cry.*] She goes so far as to say, if I'd behaved like a decent woman, she doesn't believe this would have happened! I didn't care what other people believe of me, but this I didn't bargain for! I have been unfaithful to Don in my heart — and in my mind, perhaps, — but that's all —

GEORGE. I always felt it, Tess!

TERESA. Can't you persuade mother?

GEORGE. *Bert could*, because he represents the outside world.

TERESA. But you know Bert. He wouldn't persuade her, unless he believed in me himself.

VORHEES. That's true, and I'll go talk with her now, if Mrs. Rand will see me.

[*He goes toward door.*

TERESA. [*Deeply moved, and grateful.*] *Thank* you!

VORHEES. That's all right.

[*He goes out.*

TERESA. George, I don't know — but everything, even Jimmy Cairns, seems so little now, in comparison with *Cicely — dead,* — the bottom fallen out of everything!

GEORGE. Even worse than that, for me. I've given up the nomination.

TERESA. I'm sorry! Did Bert feel you had to?

GEORGE. No more than I did. You won't have to act a lie for me after all, Tess.

TERESA. I'm glad! I know, if Eleanor Vorhees knew I was doing it —

GEORGE. She's going to know it, — and that I'm a liar! She's going to know much worse things than that! Everybody's going to know

them, I guess! Father was a crook in business, — that's the ugly, unvarnished fact, — and I've been a worse one! But I'd rather she'd learn these things from me, — what Hannock hasn't already told her — rather than she learned them outside.

TERESA. But George! George!! Don't you realize you'll lose her?

GEORGE. Well, I've lost everything else, except —

TERESA. Except what?

GEORGE. Except that! After all, I don't believe, way down at the bottom, I'm not fundamentally straight! I mean to give myself, all by myself, a chance to prove it! I know there are lots of "good men" who are born crooks. I want to see if I'm not a crook who was born good! [VORHEES *reënters.*

VORHEES. It's all right. They've told Mrs. Rand she can go in and see Cicely now, and she wants you to go with her.

TERESA. [*Holds his hand in her two, for a moment.*] Thank you! [*She goes out.*

VORHEES. And give me that paper you wrote. The sooner we get that off our hands, the better.

[GEORGE *takes up the paper and, reading it over to himself, goes slowly to* VORHEES, *and gives it to him.*

VORHEES. Too bad, old man, too bad! But it *can't* be helped.

GEORGE. I know! [VORHEES *starts to go.*] Bert, — Eleanor hasn't come yet?

VORHEES. No. Are you sure you want to see her, or shall I first —

GEORGE. No, leave it to me! I'd rather. I don't want a loophole, anywhere, for her think-

ing me a coward. I want to make a clean breast of it all! That's what I'm after, — a clean breast, no matter what the doing it costs me!

VORHEES. You're right.

[*About to go. Enter* FOOT.

FOOT. A gentleman for a newspaper, sir.

GEORGE. Will you see him, Bert?

VORHEES. Yes. [*To* FOOT.] You refer all the reporters to me. You know my address?

FOOT. Yes, sir.

VORHEES. [*To* FOOT.] Say no one here can be seen. [*To* GEORGE.] I'll see you early to-morrow.

GEORGE. Thank you. I'd like your help in laying out a plan of action. Of course I shan't do anything till after —

[*He hesitates, and raises his head and eyes to upstairs,*

VORHEES. I wouldn't.

[*Goes out.* FOOT *exits.* GEORGE *stands alone in the room, a picture of utter dejection, of ruin and sorrow, but with a bulldog look all the while, — the look of a man who is licked, beaten, but not dead yet. He stands immovable almost — in complete silence. Slowly and softly, the door opens.* VAN VRANKEN *looks in. He speaks in a sullen, hushed, and somewhat awed voice. He is pale; all evidence of drinking and excitement are gone.*

VAN VRANKEN. George?

GEORGE. [*In a monotonous voice.*] Hello, Don — you know?

VAN VRANKEN. I just heard. It's *true?* [GEORGE, *with a set face and stern lips, nods his head firmly, still standing.* VAN VRANKEN *collapses in a chair.*] God! Poor Cicely!

GEORGE. Tough, isn't it?

[*With a great sigh.*

VAN VRANKEN. I was having an awful time, George, with Mrs. Judly. She was giving it to me good for being willing to patch it up, temporarily, with Tess! She *didn't care about you!* I've come to the conclusion she don't care about anybody, anyway, but herself. Her brother telephoned it from his Club, and *she* — [*his anger rises*] had the rottenness to say she believed there was something between Hannock and Cicely. That was more than I could stand for! God knows I'm as bad as they make them, but, with that little girl dead like that — to think such a thing, let alone say it — I don't know! — It took it out of me, somehow! It didn't seem to me it was the time to have a low quarrel between two people like us! It made

us seem so beastly small! Death's such an awful — such a big — I suppose I'll feel differently to-morrow — but to-day — now — George, I *couldn't* stand for it! She kicked me out, and I give you my word of honor I'm glad she did!

GEORGE. [*Not deeply impressed, but civil.*] As you say, you'll feel differently to-morrow.

VAN VRANKEN. Very likely! Still, I've got these few decent hours, anyway, to put on your sister's grave.

[*A pause.* GEORGE *sits.*

GEORGE. I've given up running for governor.

VAN VRANKEN. [*Surprised.*] Because —?

GEORGE. No. You'll hear all the reasons soon enough. The point for the moment is, you and Tess needn't fake any further — living together.

VAN VRANKEN. [*Thoughtfully.*] I see. [*After a pause.*] George —?

GEORGE. What?

VAN VRANKEN. Could I see Cicely?

GEORGE. [*Hesitating.*] Tess is there.

VAN VRANKEN. [*After a moment.*] Then, perhaps I'd better not go —?

GEORGE. I think I *would*, if I were you.

[VAN VRANKEN *looks at* GEORGE *questioningly.*

TERESA *enters.*

TERESA. [*Quietly.*] Don —

[*Her voice fills; she turns aside, and hastily wipes her eyes.*

VAN VRANKEN. [*Moved.*] I was going upstairs.

TERESA. Not now! Mother and I have just left. They've come to —

[*She stops, and again turns aside.*

VAN VRANKEN. Where are the children?

TERESA. Home!

VAN VRANKEN. "Home"?

[*Very meaningly.*

TERESA. At the house.

VAN VRANKEN. Oh, Tess! — I'm — I'm not fit to take care of them! You'd better take them both, Tess, but let me see them off and on —

TERESA. I'm going back now with you, Don.

VAN VRANKEN. You needn't. I take it all back, Tess. You can have it your own way entirely. Leave Mrs. Judly out of it, — that's all I'll ask. Outside that, I'll fix it easy for you.

TERESA. Thank you, Don, [*after a second's pause*] but, if you don't mind, I'd rather go back with you for the present, anyway. It seems to me, between us, we've pretty well spoiled everything except — well, — perhaps, in thinking of the children's happiness we might find something for ourselves! What do you say?

VAN VRANKEN. It's worth a try — so long as you're willing!

[*Enter* MRS. RAND *in a flurry.*

MRS. RAND. Has any one thought to send for a dressmaker? [*Nobody answers.*] Did *you* think of it, Teresa?

TERESA. No, I'm afraid I didn't.

MRS. RAND. [*Her eyes filling.*] I haven't the remotest idea what's the thing to wear! In Middleburg, I'd have known, — but here, I'm always wrong! If I'd had my way, I'd never have taken off my crêpe veil for your father, and now *I wish I hadn't!* [*She sees* DON.] Oh! I didn't see you, Don. Have you come to beg Tess's pardon? Has this terrible thing reformed you?

VAN VRANKEN. I don't know, mother, how much reform is possible, but I came to tell Tess I'm ashamed —

[*He and* TERESA *exchange a look of almost sympathy, — at least, all antagonism has gone from them.*

MRS. RAND. I confess, if I were Tess I could never forgive you! *Her father* spoiled me for that sort of thing!

GEORGE. Tess isn't thinking now only of herself.

MRS. RAND. Oh, why did we ever come here! That was the first and *great mistake!* I haven't had a happy moment since I left their father's and my old home!

TERESA. Mother! Mother!!

MRS. RAND. It's the truth, — I haven't! I've never been anything, in New York, but a fizzle! I've been snubbed right and left by the people I wanted to know! I'm lonesome for my church, and if I died I wouldn't have a handful of people at my funeral!

GEORGE. But you're going to *live*, mother, and you'll see we'll make you happy yet!

MRS. RAND. Not here! You can't do it yourself! Bert says you have given up running for governor, and Tess says everything's off between you and Eleanor. I don't have to be told how disappointed and unhappy you are, and Tess's made a miserable mess of it! And now, Cicely, the baby of you all! — killed, like this! [*She breaks down into hysterical sobbing.*] It's more than I can bear! I tell you, children, I can't bear it! And it's all thanks to coming *here!!* This is what we get for not doing what your father wished. Why didn't we stay home? I amounted to something there. I had as much sense as my neighbors. I could hold my own! Here, I've been made to understand I was such a nonentity — that I've grown

actually to be the fool they believe me! Oh, what the City has done for the whole of us!

TERESA. Yes, you're right, mother. I was happy too, till I came here. It was the City that taught me to make the worst of things, instead of the best of them.

GEORGE. [*Gently.*] No, Tess — let's be honest with ourselves to-day. After all, it's our own fault —

VAN VRANKEN. I agree with Tess! She and I, in a small town, would have been happy always! I'd not have been tempted like I am here — I couldn't have had the chances —

GEORGE. [*Rising and speaking with the fulness of conviction.*] *No!* You're all wrong! Don't blame the City. It's not her fault! It's our own! What the City does is to bring out what's strongest in us. If at heart we're

good, the good in us will win! If the bad is strongest, God help us! Don't blame the City! *She* gives the man his opportunity; it is up to *him* what he makes of it! A man can live in a small town all his life, and deceive the whole place and *himself* into thinking he's got all the virtues, when at heart he's a hypocrite! But the village gives him no chance to find it out, to prove it to his fellows — the small town is too easy! *But the City! ! !* A man goes to the gates of the City and knocks! — New York or Chicago, Boston or San Francisco, no matter *what* city so long as it's big, and busy, and selfish, and self-centred. And she comes to her gates and takes him in, and she stands him in the middle of her market place — where Wall Street and Herald Square and Fifth Avenue and the Bowery, and Harlem, and Forty-second Street all meet, and there she strips him naked of all his disguises

— and all his hypocrisies, — and she paints his ambition on her fences, and lights up her sky-scrapers with it! — what *he wants* to be and *what he thinks he is!* — and then she says to him, Make good if you can, or to Hell with you! And what is in him comes out to clothe his nakedness, and to the City he can't lie! *I know*, because *I tried!*

[*A short pause.* FOOT *enters.*

FOOT. Miss Vorhees.

GEORGE. Ask her to come in here.

[TERESA *rises quickly.*

TERESA. Don, I think —

VAN VRANKEN. I've a taxi outside.

MRS. RAND. All this time, and that clock going on every minute!

TERESA. [*To* MRS. RAND.] Mother, if you want to see us after dinner, telephone.

[*Kisses her.*

MRS. RAND. What about our clothes?

TERESA. I'll attend to everything in the morning.

[TERESA *and* DON *go out together.*

MRS. RAND. I think I'd rather be alone with you, George, to-night, if the things are off between you and Eleanor. At a time like this, there is no excuse for her going back on you —

GEORGE. Hush, mother! You don't understand. She has every excuse. I'll tell you about it afterward.

MRS. RAND. No, tell her for me not to stop. I wanted her, because I thought she loved you — and was to be one of us — that's all! [*Enter* ELEANOR.] Thank you for coming back, Eleanor, but good night. George will explain.

[*She goes out.*

ELEANOR. What is the matter with your

mother? and Teresa? And Bert seemed strange, too, when I met him outside. What have I done?

GEORGE. Nothing, Eleanor.

ELEANOR. [*Realizing what it may mean.*] They think I believed what Hannock said? That anything he would say against *you* could for *one* moment mean anything to *me!*

GEORGE. You didn't believe Hannock?

ELEANOR. Not for one second! That's why I left the room.

GEORGE. You'd better have stayed.

ELEANOR. Why?

GEORGE. Because he told the truth!

ELEANOR. How do you mean?

GEORGE. Everything he told me here, this afternoon, was true.

ELEANOR. Not when *I* was here! When I

was here, he was calling you a thief, and a cheat, and a liar!

GEORGE. He was right!

ELEANOR. No! I don't understand you!

GEORGE. Your brother understands — and I've withdrawn my name from the nomination! I'm giving up all the things it seemed to me I wanted most, — and *you*, most of all, Eleanor! I thought I minded losing the others, but in comparison with what I feel now!!! *You loved* me because I was honest!

ELEANOR. Not *because*, — but, of course, if you were not *honest* —

GEORGE. Well, I'm not — I'm *not!*

ELEANOR. *You are! I know you are!*

GEORGE. No! I've lied and tricked and cheated in business, and I've got to pay for it!

ELEANOR. And all this you did *deliberately?*

GEORGE. The only excuse I have, if you can call it an excuse, is that I didn't realize what I was doing! I did what others I had been taught to respect, to pattern on, did before me, — what others were doing around me! I accepted cheating for business diplomacy. I explained lying as the commercial code! I looked on stealing as legitimate borrowing! But I was a grown man, and in possession of my senses, and I had no real excuse! Eleanor, I've been a *business "crook,"* in a big way, perhaps, but still a *"crook,"* and I'm not good enough for *you!* [*A pause.*

ELEANOR. What are you going to do?

GEORGE. Give up all the positions I haven't any right to fill. Pay back interest I hadn't any right to get, and money I hadn't any right to use! Give up principal I gained on somebody

else's risk than my own! Begin all over again at the bottom, but on the *level*, and climb, only if I can do it on the square!

ELEANOR. I understand! I understand it all, now! You've done wrong?

GEORGE. Yes.

ELEANOR. Oh, so wrong, but you're owning all up, and *giving* all up!

GEORGE. Yes.

ELEANOR. You aren't being pressed to?

GEORGE. Of course I could fight it, but what's the use? *It's true!* Now *I realize that*, I can't own up fast enough! I can't begin over again soon enough! I can't eat or sleep or take a long breath even, till I'm on the level again with myself. Even at the price of *you!* But I'll make you believe in me again, Eleanor, — you'll see, if we live long enough!

ELEANOR. We don't have to live *any longer* for that.

GEORGE. In what way?

ELEANOR. The man who has done wrong, and can own it up, — face life all over again empty-handed, emptying his own hands of his own accord, turn his back on everything he counted on and lived for, because it is the right thing to do, and because — leaving the world out of it — he *had to be honest with himself!* — that — George — is the man I look up to ten times more than the one who was *born* good and lived good because he never was tempted to enjoy the spoils of going wrong! It's the man whom it costs something to be good, — that's what makes real character! And to me — [*she goes up to him, and puts her hand on his arm*] you, here, *to-day*, are twice the man you were yesterday! You

needed a test, though we didn't know it! And at the same time we found that out, you had to go through it; and thank God, your real self has triumphed! *To-day* you *are* the man I loved yesterday!

GEORGE. [*Looking away.*] Now, I know what those people mean who say a man gets all the *Hell* that's coming to him *in this world,* — [*looking at her*] — and *all the Heaven, too!*

THE CURTAIN FALLS